

The Development of the Israel-Palestine Conflict

In (mostly) historical order from the perspectives of anarchists

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When Israel Reigns

Jules Chazanoff

August 18, 1938

Some ten years ago, during a series of lectures on the social value of the Zionist movement, I had the painful surprise of being violently taken to task by comrades of Jewish origin, accusing me of engaging in a veritable anti-Semitic campaign. The arguments put forward at the time, to legitimize a movement I considered inappropriate, failed to shake my convictions, and I remain, to this day, as fiercely opposed to the Jewish nationalism that is flourishing, not without some difficulty, in Palestine, as I was yesterday to this mobilization of spirits in favor of the unjustly oppressed “wandering” people.

However, the tragic incidents taking place in the territories of the “reconquered nation” force us, once again, to ask: is there a Jewish problem? It’s obvious that Jews are persecuted in Romania, Poland and Germany. It’s also true that Mussolini, for reasons of foreign policy, has just declared war on Israel. We are aware of all this, and we understand the concern of human beings whose beliefs and lives are threatened, and for whom the future looks increasingly uncertain. But Jews are not the only victims of authoritarian regimes. They share the fate of all those who, for multiple and sometimes divergent causes, are sacrificed to the ferocious law of the new societies that are being born in blood and crime, and the Catholics across the Rhine themselves know the cost of not adopting Hitler’s religion. We must therefore consider that, however interesting the fate of the Israelites may be, subjected in any part of the world to the unspeakable treatment we know, it is no more – nor less – interesting than that of the millions of unfortunate people who suffer the misdeeds of a murderous civilization, and it seems as absurd to us to see the Jews found a

nation as if we heard the Christians of Germany claim a territory to create a home.

In our view, then, there is no such thing as a specifically Jewish question; there is a social question that encompasses an incalculable number of problems to which a solution must be found. The Jewish problem is one of these.

Insofar as we can accept as accurate the statistics provided by the latest censuses, there are some ten million Jews spread across the various countries of Europe and America. It is safe to say that fifty percent of this population is assimilated or in the process of being assimilated, and that five million Jews therefore enjoy the freedoms and rights in force in the countries that have adopted them: America, England and France. That leaves the others, considered a national minority in Poland, Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary, and those in Germany and Austria, subject to terribly oppressive special laws since the advent of Hitler.

Assuming that the language, aspirations, culture, situation and different needs of the various categories of Jews scattered across the globe are not an obstacle to the formation of a nation: assuming that only the persecuted abandon an inhospitable land, can Palestine serve as a refuge for all the unfortunates in search of a home?

We have no choice but to reply that Palestine is not a land of settlement, that it cannot accommodate the millions of oppressed or starving Jews of Europe, and that, until now, a small minority – scarcely a hundred thousand men – has been able to settle there, with the help of Jewish high finance, aided by the support of the British government. Unfortunately, however, this occupation was carried out to the detriment of the Arab population, who saw their property and jobs taken away by the immigrants.

At the start of the exodus, Arab landowners sold their land to the new arrivals, but the Arab people as a whole had nothing to gain, and everything to lose, from these operations, which were profitable for some. Some farmers temporarily found a market for their produce, and Arab workers found work in Jewish businesses. But as colonization proceeded, Jewish nationalism, like all nationalisms, was exacerbated, and the slogans “Buy Jewish products” and “Employ Jewish labor” became the inevitable slogans of Zionism.

For the Zionists,” says Reginald Reynolds, an English journalist known for his liberalism:

There was never any question of settling among the Arabs and living alongside them as equals. They have, in Palestine, the intolerable arrogance of a people who consider themselves a superior race, and

the Arabs hate them for the same reason that the Negro hates the white man of America.

It is clear, then, that this minority of Jews who have settled in Palestine, as if in a conquered land, have nothing in common with all the Israelites persecuted in Europe, and that it is they who provoke the violent reactions of the Arab population.

Space does not permit us to go into the subject at hand, but one thing is certain: Jewish penetration of Palestine can only be achieved by sacrificing the Arab population, who are defending themselves with the courage of despair. There can be no doubt that political issues are aggravating an acute conflict that began in the immediate aftermath of the war. Mussolini's attitude and burgeoning anti-Semitism are no strangers to Palestinian unrest. The Duce took advantage of the mess caused by the contradictory interests of world imperialism to consolidate his positions: he supported the Arab against the Jew, and that was good politics.

The curious thing is that the Arabs are calling for national independence and a democratic constitution, and these hopes are favored by Hitler and Mussolini and constantly opposed by Jewish Zionist organizations. The Jew, more reactionary than the Roman or German dictator, is beyond comprehension.

So let's stop talking about humanity. Palestine has nothing to do with the Jewish problem. We'll say more! Independent Palestine, worked by the Arabs who have lived there for thousands of years, even under the British protectorate, can once again become a hotbed of peace, whereas today it is nothing more than a factor in civil war that could degenerate into international war. Palestine will never be a Jewish nation; at worst, it can only become a country exploited by Jewish finance. And if we have always defended the Jews when Israel dies, we can only fight the minority of Jews who want Israel to reign.

P.-S. As I said in the course of this article, it's impossible to cover the entire Jewish problem in just a few dozen lines, so the above article is bound to be incomplete. In a forthcoming paper, we'll take a broader look at the exploitation of Judaism by totalitarian powers, and of the Jewish people as a whole by imperialist powers. And let it be said that we never confuse the Jewish people with Jewish capitalism.

<https://www.retronews.fr/journal/le-libertaire/18-aout-1938/8/aaa6c0e0-69d1-401f-8ca9-ecc65ce298cd>

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Translated by Amayas.

State Versus Commune in Israel

Nathan Chofshi

1950

We believe that the following “open letter”, published in FREIE ARBEITER STIMME, despite its concern with a particular discussion in the Jewish press, will be of interest to our readers for its picture of the Israeli State.

—Resistance.

After a long interval I have again begun to receive the “Freie Arbeiter Stimme” and was pained to discover a number of very strange reactions and news items regarding the State of Israel. A few examples will suffice.

In an article dealing with our Parliament (Knesseth), the author, (perhaps Nisenson; the issue is not at hand) writes that our State of Israel is being governed in the spirit of the Prophets. In the issue of 11 November, there is a report on a discussion held by a group of Los Angeles anarchists regarding the spirit of the Israeli-State. The veteran anarchist, Comrade Isguir, maintained that “inasmuch as a great part of the anarchist ideal has been realized in the life of Israel, he therefore sees no contradiction between his ideal which is still that of ‘libertarian socialism’ on the one hand, and the work of the Histadruth (labor federation) and *of the state of Israel* on the other.”

The same issue reports discussions amongst Jewish anarchists in England which conclude that “Israel will fulfill the ideal of free socialism.” There have also been enthusiastic references to the “Miracle of Israel.”

These ideas and expressions of opinion have created doubts in my mind in two separate areas:

1. Is anarchism really the ideal I have believed it to be for many years, namely: life without rulers, force, or governments, founded on the voluntary co-operation of free men — or was I mistaken and is anarchism really something different?
2. After 40 years of life and work in Palestine I considered myself well acquainted with conditions of life in this country. But reading the opinions and news accounts submitted by Comrade Isguir and others, I wondered if they, in America and in England, can perceive the truth more accurately than I can, living here.

It is really very important to clear up these matters. Let me dwell on these two points:

(1) I am strongly convinced that the libertarian ideal which opposes all rulers and states, makes no exceptions, grants no privileges to a Jewish or Israeli state.

Jewish history provides endless examples of the hardships caused by oppressors and governments on the Jewish people, hardships greater than those caused on all other nations by their own rulers.

It is therefore strange to note the ecstatic response of Jewish anarchists to the emergence of a Jewish state, a state which in daily life means governmental bureaucracy, wars, military conscription, endless armaments consuming the national income, police, prisons, censorship, etc. Under these circumstances we should perhaps offer our loyalty to the concept of *Jewish State-Anarchism*? This would perhaps be in keeping with the universal poverty of human life and shabbiness of human thought.

(2) The majority of men have always found it difficult to differentiate between nation and state. Rulers of all times and kinds, statist of both right and left, have directed all their energies toward the implanting and strengthening of this horrible untruth.

Freedom-loving men, however, have always taught that such identification was false, and now this lie is particularly obvious in regard to the state of Israel. When a new arrival in Israel is shown the communes, the rural cooperatives, the workers' organizations, the various cultural organizations and movements as well as the technical advances, both rural and urban, when these are all identified with the State, it is only natural to express great admiration in the face of such unique advances on the part of the government in the short time of its existence. It is indeed miraculous, and sharply contradictory to the negative anarchist attitude to governments in general.

But it is the exact contrary which is actually true. All these wonders were achieved voluntarily, freely, without coercion, and these proclaim precisely, and over many years, what the free will of man can create. We have always been saddened by the fact that our peaceful pioneering and creation were not only misunderstood, but also condemned by anarchists and socialists, and that it was therefore natural that our comrades throughout the world gained nothing from our rich experience. We were considered fanatic Zionists who deserted the struggle elsewhere to settle in far-off Palestine, in Asia! Terrible reactionaries!

But then, suddenly, we became like other people: Jews created a government, complete with soldiers, wars, victories; with the glare of shells and the bursts of cannon. It was perhaps the glare of these shells which permitted the discovery of Palestine, and the impression, seemingly, also registered on the retinas of Jewish anarchists. And so now they also speak of the wonders created by the State of Israel, and all in so short a time! ... Shall we laugh or weep?

The naked truth is that the State of Israel arrived on the scene to discover a fully developed community which the state is now exploiting for its very exis-

tence! And the only creation for which the state is solely responsible — a creation which is inseparably tied to its own creation — is the war with the Arabs. The war can be ascribed equally to the Arab States and to the newly-created Jewish State, and in this respect they are functioning properly.

The praise heaped upon the Jewish state, the jubilation provoked by the Miracle of Israel amongst Jewish anarchists, disregard completely the stark fact that this state, as naturally with all states, was built on blood and ammunition. Are Jewish anarchists acquainted with the efforts of “Ihud” (“Union”, a group working for a bi-national state based on Arab-Jewish equality), of the late Dr. Judah Magnes, and of our own pacifist group to avoid war?

Do they know that there had existed great possibilities for Jewish-Arab understanding as well as for a large Jewish immigration, and that it was only the state-mania which destroyed these possibilities and led to war with all its attendant fears and dangers?

Instead of a large and peaceful immigration based on Jewish-Arab understanding, as we had proposed with the agreement of some prominent Arab leaders, we now have a mass-immigration exploiting the war-horror, occupying the villages and towns of the hundreds of thousands of Arabs who fled from their homes under fire, filled with fear of the victorious Jewish forces, a fear based on the horrible experiences under the victors. And the state is pleased: homes, business, properties, fields and gardens cultivated by generations of Arabs, all came as a mighty and blessed inheritance to the Jews.

The Jewish refugee of yesterday became the heir of the Arab refugee of today who in masses is suffering from homelessness, hunger, cold. Is the Jewish anarchist indifferent because we are dealing here “only” with Arab refugees and not with Jewish refugees?

Let me close here altho there is still much to say, but let me at least suggest to our anarchists that they consider more carefully the very basic question of future development of the forms of free life in the face of increasing centralization and concentration by our Israel government. Daily the government penetrates ever more deeply into the lives of people and groups, in a manner which is as distant from libertarian socialism as is east from west. We would bless every expression of help for the freely creative life in Israel, but we cannot overemphasize the abyss which exists between nation and state, between free and creative men and governmental coercion.

Must mature Jewish anarchists, at this late date, start memorizing their ABC's?
—Nathan Chofshi

Nahalal
January, 1950

Excerpts from Nathan Chofshi's letter to 'Jewish Newsletter' of New York (1959)

"If you really wanted to know what happened, we old Jewish settlers in Palestine who witnessed the fight could tell you how and in what manner we Jews forced the Arabs to leave cities and villages... Some of them were driven out by force of arms; others were made to leave by deceit, lying and false promises. It is enough to cite the cities of Jaffa, Lydda, Ramleh, Beer Sheba, and Acre from among numberless others...

Here we have people who lived on its own land for 1,300 years. We came and turned the native Arabs into tragic refugees. And still we dare to slander and malign them, to besmirch their name. Instead of being deeply ashamed of what we did and of trying to undo some of the evil we committed, by helping those unfortunate refugees, we justify our terrible acts and even attempt to glorify them."

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From 'Resistance', April 1951, New York City

Palestine

Albert Meltzer

1948

The war in Palestine continues to take up headlines in the Press, as politicians bicker in pretences at armistices and parleys, not in the least in an endeavour to find a reasonable solution, but solely in order to preserve the balance of power existing in the “cold war”.

The ironic nature of the war is that the opposing forces consider themselves as fighting against something which does not happen to be on the other side of the barricades. The thousands of immigrants arriving from Europe are passionately keen to defend their stakes in Israel, and after years in D.P. [Displaced Persons] camps and concentration camps they are anxious to “fight back”; but, of course, the Arabs they are fighting against were not responsible for European anti-Semitism. The Arabs regard themselves as fighting against European influence; to them it is a “new aggression of the West against the East” and they regard it as a par with British Imperialism or the Italian war in Abyssinia.

There is a certain amount of truth in both claims, because undoubtedly much of the outside criticism of Zionism comes from anti-Semitism and support for Zionism out of sympathy with Jewish victims of Nazi and other oppression in Europe. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the majority of Zionists regard the Arabs in the same way as other colonisers have regarded other “native inhabitants”, and it is hardly an answer for the Israeli authorities to claim cooperation from certain Arab tribes, such as the Druses, who have always been on unfriendly terms with other Arabs and inclined towards their enemies. Similar tactics were pursued by the British in India.

There is not the slightest question of Jewish superiority in any renewed outbreak of fighting, no matter how rated the Arab, troops may have been in the past; and particularly since the British withdrawal enabled them to bring in thousands of Jewish D.P.s and also munitions from all over Europe, as well as volunteers. The Arabs accuse Britain of betraying their interests in withdrawing at the particular time it did (had it withdrawn in 1936, for instance, the Jews could have been militarily defeated by them, since at that time they had no possibility of calling in large-scale immigration from Europe, importing arms from countries like Czechoslovakia, nor had they the thousands of British-trained troops from the war.) On the other hand, the Zionists generally have portrayed Britain as aiding the Arabs on the grounds of the association with Abdullah of Transjordan, and there is a left-wing picture (which is now accepted as truth by all Zionists) of Bevin forcing through a pro-Arab policy against the Cabinet’s wish, and being able to call the war off any time he chose.

Bevin’s ability to control the Arab States’ policy in regard to Palestine (but not in regard to Egypt or the Sudan!) may be doubted. It is more certain that Britain has played a diplomatic game of keeping in with both sides: influenc-

ing the Arab countries by the military missions under Glubb, etc., and relying on the pro-British sentiments of Weizmann and the Social-Democrats on the Jewish side. An alternative theory is pointed out by many: namely, that Britain and America — who are agreed on policy in every country in the world — may be not so much at loggerheads over this one small country as may be imagined. America ostensibly and loudly backs the Jewish side and calls on their support in the case of war. This is convenient for whoever may be President (having to placate the New York Jewish vote) and in addition, American influence among European Jewish circles can be considered. On the other hand, Britain ostensibly backs the Arabs — she has “traditional friendships” among the Arab countries, and calls on their support in the case of war. The Jewish vote in this country does not count very highly; and in any case is not generally pro-Zionist. Thus, whoever wins is an ally against Russia for Britain — or America!

It cannot be doubted that Palestine may be an important focal point in another war, since Russia has seen the weakness of the Arab countries, and that even such a small body as Palestine Jewry can resist them all, and if it had not been restrained, might by now have toppled them all over. Her striking point in a war might well be the oil fields of Iran and with only “Glubb’s Girls” to stop them might soon be in Cairo. The Israeli leaders are well aware of their importance to world politics, and disinclined to give way over limiting their territory, to please the Arabs.

ARAB REFUGEES

Meanwhile, the most pressing of all post-war problems has received very little notice — namely the displacement of thousands of Arabs from their homes. These thousands became refugees not because of “misleading Arab propaganda” as the Israel Government claims, but because they feared terrorists attacks such as that of the Jewish Fascists on Deir Yassin, when a village which had actually not cooperated with and even resisted Arab terrorists, was massacred by Jewish terrorists. As the thousands of Jewish immigrants come in, the Israel Government can only accommodate them in the deserted Arab cities, and in such towns as Jaffa, transform it completely from an all Arab city to a Jewish city. Before very long, there will simply be nowhere for them to go back to, and having gone, the Israel Government does not particularly want them back, however it condemned the methods which drove them away.

It is futile and unreasonable to blame the Jewish immigrants for this problem of Arab homelessness; they have themselves certainly nowhere else to go, and

are naturally bitter at the cynical ease with which Great Powers who deny the great open spaces under their control to settlers, declare that they ought not to go to Palestine but elsewhere. They cannot be expected to stay behind barbed wire and bars until their death, as has been apparently the view of the British Government in its great Cyprus concentration camp experiment (which still goes on). They are no more likely to consider Arab claims than the thousands of Europeans who swarmed to build up America considered the Indians. In spite of all the bunk about peace by settlement and negotiations between the Powers, under the United Nations delusion, the fact is that conflict, in these circumstances inevitable, and victory will certainly go to the strongest side. The Powers are not really interested in any other solution, but are doing their best to use the Palestine struggle as one of the many pawns in the cold war.

NO EASY SOLUTION

As internationalists we ought not to delude ourselves into any other facile solution, but rather to look for hopes that in the future some measure of international co-operation will come about, not between governments or political leaders, but from the people from below, and in the meantime to expose such delusions as those spread by the leaders of all sides in any war. But the major deduction to be drawn from the Palestine conflict is the utter degeneration of Soviet Russia into Czarism, a fact known to everybody with the least perception who witnesses the flight of so many Jews from Europe, but one concealed not least by the Zionist parties who welcome Russian U.N.O. [United Nations Organization] support, and who have in any case a certain vested interest in anti-Semitism. There can be no denying the fact that if conditions were normal and decent in Rumania, Poland, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and the other countries behind the Iron Curtain, there would be no "D.P. problem": the fact of open and silent pogroms in those countries causes the great exodus from Eastern Europe to the overladen D.P. camps of Germany and Italy, and the great freights of human cargo leaving the Danubian ports. The Communists may deny responsibility for this, but the fact remains that all opposition to Stalin has been stamped out in those countries and if Stalin so wished, anti-Semitism could not last a minute. It has not been tolerated in Russia for many years because of its identification with and exploitation by the "White" Czarists, but now that Red Czarism is so firmly in the saddle, it is used throughout the Great Russian Empire of Eastern Europe to divide and rule.

INTERNATIONALIST

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From 'Freedom, Anarchist Fortnightly', Vol. 9, No. 24, November 27th, 1948.
'Internationalist' is a known pen name used by Albert Meltzer. —M.Gouldhawke

Two Local Wars

Situationist International

October 1967

The Arab-Israel war was a dirty trick pulled by modern history on the good conscience of the Left, which was communing in the great spectacle of its protest against the Vietnam war. The false consciousness that saw in the NLF the champion of “socialist revolution” against American imperialism could only get entangled and collapse amidst its insurmountable contradictions when it had to decide between Israel and Nasser. Yet throughout all its ludicrous polemics it never stopped proclaiming that one or the other was completely in the right, or even that one or another of their perspectives was revolutionary.

Through its immigration into underdeveloped areas, the revolutionary struggle was subjected to a double alienation: that of an impotent Left facing an overdeveloped capitalism it was in no way capable of combating, and that of the laboring masses in the colonized countries who inherited the remains of a mutilated revolution and have had to suffer its defects. The absence of a revolutionary movement in Europe has reduced the Left to its simplest expression: a mass of spectators who swoon with rapture each time the exploited in the colonies take up arms against their masters, and who cannot help seeing these uprisings as the epitome of Revolution. At the same time, the absence from political life of the proletariat as a class-for-itself (and for us the proletariat is revolutionary or it is nothing) has allowed this Left to become the “Knight of Virtue” in a world without virtue. But when it bewails its situation and complains about the “world order” being at variance with its good intentions, and when it maintains its poor yearnings in the face of this order, it is in fact attached to this order as to its own essence, and if this order was taken away from it, it would lose *everything*. The European Left shows itself so poor that, like a traveler in the

desert longing for a single drop of water, all it seems to need to console itself is the meager feeling of an abstract objection. From the little with which it is satisfied one can measure the extent of its poverty. It is as alien to history as the proletariat is alien to this world; false consciousness is its natural condition, the spectacle is its element, and the apparent opposition of systems is its universal frame of reference: wherever there is a conflict it always sees Good fighting Evil, “total revolution” versus “total reaction.”

The attachment of this spectator consciousness to *alien* causes remains irrational, and its virtuous protests flounder in the tortuous paths of its guilt. Most of the “Vietnam Committees” in France split up during the “Six Day War” and some of the war resistance groups in the United States also revealed *their reality*. “One cannot be at the same time for the Vietnamese and against the Jews menaced with extermination,” is the cry of some. “Can you fight against the Americans in Vietnam while supporting their allied Zionist aggressors?” is the reply of others. And then they plunge into Byzantine discussions ... Sartre hasn’t recovered from it yet. In fact this whole fine lot does not actually fight what it condemns, nor does it know that of which it approves. Its opposition to the American war is almost always combined with unconditional support of the Vietcong; but in any case this opposition remains spectacular for everyone. Those who were really opposed to Spanish fascism went to fight it. No one has yet gone off to fight “Yankee imperialism.” The consumers of illusory participation are offered a whole range of spectacular choices: Stalino-Gaullist nationalism against the Americans (Humphrey’s visit was the sole occasion the PCF has demonstrated with its remaining faithful); the sale of the *Vietnam Newsletter* or of publicity handouts from Ho Chi Minh’s state; or pacifist demonstrations. Neither the Proves (before their dissolution) nor the Berlin students have been able to go beyond the narrow framework of anti-imperialist “action.”

The war opposition in America has naturally been more serious since it finds itself face to face with the real enemy. For some young people, however, it means a *mechanistic* identification with the apparent enemies of their real enemies; which reinforces the confusion of a working class already subjected to the worst brutalization and mystification, and contributes to maintaining it in that “reactionary,” state of mind from which one draws arguments against it.

Guevara’s critique seems to us more important since it has its roots in real struggles, but it falls short by default. Che is certainly one of the last consequent Leninists of our time. But like Epimenides, he seems to have slept for the last fifty years to be able to believe that there is still a “progressive bloc” which is unaccountably “failing.” This bureaucratic and romantic revolutionary only sees

in imperialism the highest stage of capitalism, struggling against a society that is socialist in spite of its imperfections.

The USSR's embarrassingly evident deficiencies are coming to seem more and more "natural." As for China, according to an official declaration it remains "ready to accept all national sacrifices to support North Vietnam against the USA (*SI note: in lieu of supporting the workers of Hong Kong*) and constitutes the most solid and secure rear guard for the Vietnamese people in their struggle against imperialism." In fact, no one doubts that if the last Vietnamese were killed, Mao's bureaucratic China would still be intact. (According to *Izvestia*, China and the United States have already concluded a mutual nonintervention pact.)

Neither the manichean consciousness of the virtuous Left nor the bureaucracy are capable of seeing the profound unity of today's world. Dialectics is their common enemy. As for revolutionary criticism, it begins beyond good and evil; it takes its roots in history and operates on the totality of the existing world. In no case can it applaud a belligerent *state* or support the bureaucracy of an exploiting state in formation. It must first of all lay bare the *truth* of present struggles by putting them back into their historical context, and unmask the hidden ends of the forces *officially* in conflict. The arm of critique is the prelude to the critique by arms.

The peaceful coexistence of bourgeois and bureaucratic lies ended up prevailing over the lie of their confrontation; the balance of terror was broken in Cuba in 1962 with the rout of the Russians. Since that time American imperialism has been the unchallenged master of the world. And it can remain so only by aggression since it has no chance of seducing the disinherited, who are more easily attracted by the Sino-Soviet model. State-capitalism is the natural tendency of colonized societies where the state is generally formed before the historical classes. The total elimination of its capital and its commodities from the world market is the deadly threat that haunts the American propertied class and its free-enterprise economy; this is the key to its aggressive rage.

Since the great crisis of 1929, state intervention has been more and more conspicuous in market mechanisms; the economy can no longer function steadily without massive expenditures by the state, the main "consumer," of all noncommercial production (especially that of the armament industries). This does not save it from remaining in a state of permanent crisis and in constant need of expanding its public sector at the expense of its private sector. A relentless logic pushes the system toward increasingly state-controlled capitalism, generating severe social conflicts.

The profound crisis of the American system lies in its inability to produce sufficient profits on the social scale. It must therefore achieve abroad what it cannot

do at home, namely increase the amount of profit in proportion to the amount of existing capital. The propertied class, which also more or less possesses the state, relies on its imperialist enterprises to realize this insane dream. For this class, state-capitalism means death just as much as does *communism*; that is why it is essentially incapable of seeing any difference between them.

The artificial functioning of the monopolistic economy as a “war economy” ensures, for the moment, that the ruling-class policy is willingly supported by the workers, who enjoy full employment and a spectacular abundance: “At the moment, the proportion of labor employed in jobs connected with national defense amounts to 5.2% of the total American labor force, compared with 3.9% two years ago... The number of civil jobs in the national defense sector has increased from 3,000,000 to 4,100,000 over the last two years.” (*Le Monde*, 17 September 1967.) Meanwhile, market capitalism vaguely feels that by extending its territorial control it will achieve an accelerated expansion capable of balancing the ever-increasing demands of non-profit-making production. The ferocious defense of regions of the “free” world where its interests are often trifling (in 1959 American investments in South Vietnam did not exceed 50 million dollars) is part of a long-term strategy that hopes eventually to be able to write off military expenditures as mere business expenses in ensuring the United States not only a market but also the monopolistic control of the means of production of the greater part of the world. But everything works against this project. On one hand, the internal contradictions of private capitalism: particular interests conflict with the general interest of the propertied class as a whole, as with groups that make short-term profits from state contracts (notably arms manufacturers), or monopolistic enterprises that are reluctant to invest in underdeveloped countries, where productivity is very low in spite of cheap labor, preferring instead the “advanced” part of the world (especially Europe, which is still more profitable than saturated America). On the other hand, it clashes with the immediate interests of the disinherited masses, whose first move can only be to eliminate the indigenous strata that exploit them—which are the only strata able to ensure the United States any infiltration whatsoever.

According to Rostow, the “growth” specialist of the State Department, Vietnam is for the moment only the first teeth of this vast strategy, which to ensure its exploitative peace must start with a war destruction that can hardly succeed. The aggressiveness of American imperialism is thus in no way the aberration of a bad administration, but a necessity for the class relations of private capitalism, which, if not overthrown by a revolutionary movement, unrelentingly evolves toward a technocratic state-capitalism. It is in this general framework of a still

undominated global economy that the history of the alienated struggles of our time must be situated.

The destruction of the old “Asiatic” structures by colonial penetration gave rise to a new urban stratum while increasing the pauperization of a large portion of the super-exploited peasantry. The conjuncture of these two forces constituted the driving force of the Vietnamese movement. Among the urban strata (petty bourgeois and even bourgeois) were formed the first nationalist nuclei and the skeleton of what was to be, from 1930 on, the Indochinese Communist Party. Its adherence to Bolshevik ideology (in its Stalinist version), which led it to graft an essentially agrarian program on to the purely nationalist one, enabled the ICP to become the principal director of the anti-colonial struggle and to marshal the great mass of peasants who had spontaneously risen. The “peasant soviets” of 1931 were the first manifestation of this movement. But by linking its fate to that of the Third International, the ICP subjected itself to all the vicissitudes of Stalinist diplomacy and to the fluctuations of the national and state interests of the Russian bureaucracy. After the Seventh Comintern Congress (August 1935) “the struggle against French imperialism” vanished from the program and was soon replaced by a struggle against the powerful Trotskyist party. “As for the Trotskyists, no alliances, no concessions; they must be unmasked for what they are: the agents of fascism” (Report of Ho Chi Minh to the Comintern, July 1939). The Hitler-Stalin Pact and the banning of the CP in France and its colonies allowed the ICP to change its line: “Our party finds it a question of life or death ... to struggle against the imperialist war and the French policy of piracy and massacre (*i.e. against Nazi Germany-SI*) ... but we will at the same time combat the aggressive aims of Japanese fascism.”

Toward the end of World War II, with the effective help of the Americans, the Vietminh was in control of the greater part of the country and was recognized by France as the sole representative of Indochina. It was at this point that Ho preferred “to sniff a little French shit rather than eat Chinese shit for a lifetime” and signed, to make the task of his colleague-masters easier, the monstrous compromise of 1946, which recognized Vietnam as both a “free state” and as “belonging to the Indochinese Federation of the French Union.” This compromise enabled France to re-conquer part of the country and, at the same time the Stalinists lost their share of bourgeois power in France, to wage a war that lasted eight years, at the end of which the Vietminh gave up the South to the most retrograde strata and their American protectors and definitively won the North for itself. After systematically eliminating the remaining revolutionary elements (the last Trotskyist leader, Ta Tu Thau, was assassinated by 1946) the Vietminh bureaucracy imposed its totalitarian power on the peasantry and started the industrialization

of the country within a state-capitalist framework. The bettering of the lot of the peasants, following their conquests during the long liberation struggle, was, in line with bureaucratic logic, subordinated to the interests of the rising state: the goal was to be greater productivity, with the state remaining the uncontested master of that production. The authoritarian implementation of agrarian reform gave rise in 1956 to violent insurrections and bloody repression (above all in Ho Chi Minh's own native province). The peasants who had carried the bureaucracy to power were to be its first victims. For several years afterwards the bureaucracy tried to smother the memory of this "serious mistake" in an "orgy of self-criticism."

But the same Geneva agreements enabled the Diem clique to set up, south of the 17th parallel, a bureaucratic, feudal and theocratic state in the service of the landowners and compradore bourgeoisie. Within a few years this state was to nullify, by a few suitable "agrarian reforms," everything the peasantry had won. The peasants of the South, some of whom had never laid down their arms, were to fall back in the grip of oppression and super-exploitation. This is the second Vietnam war. The mass of the insurgent peasants, taking up arms once more against their old enemies, also followed once again their old leaders. The National Liberation Front succeeded the Vietminh, inheriting both its qualities and its grave defects. By making itself the champion of national struggle and peasant war, the NLF won over the countryside from the very first and made it the main seat of the armed resistance. Its successive victories over the official army provoked the increasingly massive intervention of the Americans, to the point of reducing the conflict to an open colonial war, with the Vietnamese pitted against an invading army. Its determination in the struggle, its clearly anti-feudal program and its unitary perspectives remain the principal qualities of the movement. But in no way does the NLF's struggle go beyond the classical framework of national liberation struggles. Its program remains based on a compromise among a vast coalition of classes, dominated by the overriding goal of wiping out the American aggression. It is no accident that it rejects the title "Vietcong" (i.e. Vietnamese communists) and insists on its national character. Its structures are those of a state in formation: in the zones under its control it already levies taxes and institutes compulsory military service.

These minimal qualities in the struggle and the social objectives that they express remain totally absent in the confrontation between Israel and the Arabs. The specific contradictions of Zionism and of splintered Arab society add to the general confusion.

Since its origins the Zionist movement has been the contrary of the revolutionary solution to what used to be called the *Jewish question*. A direct product

of European capitalism, it did not aim at the overthrow of a society that needed to persecute Jews, but at the creation of a Jewish national entity that would be protected from the anti-Semitic aberrations of decadent capitalism; it aimed not at the abolition of injustice but at its transfer. The original sin of Zionism is that it has always acted as if Palestine were a desert island. The revolutionary workers movement saw the answer to the Jewish question in proletarian community, that is, in the destruction of capitalism and "its religion, Judaism"; the emancipation of the Jews could not take place apart from the emancipation of man. Zionism started from the opposite hypothesis. As a matter of fact, the counterrevolutionary development of the last half century proved it right, but in the same way as the development of European capitalism proved right the reformist theses of Bernstein. The success of Zionism and its corollary, the creation of the state of Israel, is merely a miserable by-product of the triumph of world counter-revolution. To "socialism in a single country" came the echo "justice for a single people" and "equality in a single kibbutz." It was with Rothschild capital that the colonization of Palestine was organized and with European surplus-value that the first kibbutzim were set up. The Jews recreated *for themselves* all the fanaticism and segregation of which they had been victims. Those who had suffered mere toleration in their society were to struggle to become in another country owners disposing of the right to tolerate others. The kibbutz was not a revolutionary supersession of Palestinian "feudalism," but a mutualist formula for the self-defense of Jewish worker-settlers *against the capitalist exploitative tendencies of the Jewish Agency*. Because it was the main Jewish owner of Palestine, the Zionist Organization defined itself as the sole representative of the superior interests of the "Jewish Nation." If it eventually allowed a certain element of self-management, it is because it was sure that this would be based on the systematic rejection of the Arab peasant.

As for the Histadrut, it was since its inception in 1920 subjected to the authority of world Zionism, that is, to the direct opposite of workers' emancipation. Arab workers were statutorily excluded from it and its activity often consisted of forbidding Jewish businesses to employ them.

The development of triangular struggles between the Arabs, the Zionists and the British was to be turned to the profit of the Zionists. Thanks to the active patronage of the Americans (since the end of World War II) and the blessing of Stalin (who saw Israel as the first "socialist" bastion in the Middle East, but also as a way to rid himself of some annoying Jews), it did not take long before the Herzlian dream was realized and the Jewish state was arbitrarily proclaimed. The recuperation of all "progressive" forms of social organization and their integration within the Zionist ideal allowed even the most "revolutionary" to work in

good conscience for the building of the bourgeois, militaristic, rabbinical state that modern Israel has become. The prolonged sleep of proletarian internationalism once more brought forth a monster. The basic injustice against the Palestinian Arabs came back to roost with the Jews themselves: the State of the Chosen People was nothing but one more class society in which all the anomalies of the old societies were recreated (hierarchical divisions, tribal opposition between the Ashkenazi and the Sephardim, racist persecution of the Arab minority, etc.). The labor union organization assumed its normal function of integrating workers into a capitalist economy, an economy of which it itself has become the main owner. It employs more workers than the state itself. It presently constitutes the bridgehead of the imperialist expansion of the new Israeli capitalism. ("Solel Boneh," an important building branch of the Histadrut, invested 180 million dollars in Africa and Asia from 1960–1966 and currently employs 12,000 African workers.)

And just as this state could never have seen the light of day without the direct intervention of Anglo-American imperialism and the massive aid of Jewish finance capital, it cannot balance its *artificial economy* today without the aid of the same forces that created it. (The annual balance of payments deficit is 600 million dollars, that is, more for each Israeli inhabitant than the average earnings of an Arab worker.) Since the settling of the first immigrant colonies, the Jews have formed a modern, European-style society alongside the economically and socially backward Arab society; the proclamation of the state of Israel only completed this process by the pure and simple expulsion of the backward elements. Israel forms by its very existence the bastion of Europe in the heart of an Afro-Asian world. Thus it has become doubly *alien*: to the Arab population, permanently reduced to the status of refugees or of colonized minority; and to the Jewish population, which had for a moment seen in it the earthly realization of all egalitarian ideologies.

But this is due not only to the contradictions of Israeli society; from the outset this situation has been constantly maintained and aggravated by the surrounding Arab societies, which have so far proved incapable of any contribution toward an effective solution.

Throughout the British Mandate period [1920–1948] the Arab resistance in Palestine was completely dominated by the propertied class: the Arab ruling classes and their British protectors. The Sykes-Picot Agreement had put an end to all the hopes of nascent Arab nationalism and subjected the skillfully carved up area to a foreign domination that is far from being over. The same strata that ensured the servitude of the Arab masses to the Ottoman Empire turned to the service of the British occupation and became accomplices of Zionist coloniza-

tion (by the sale, at very inflated prices, of their land). The backwardness of Arab society did not yet allow for the emergence of new and more advanced readerships, and the spontaneous popular upheavals found each time the same recruiters: the “bourgeois-feudal” notables and their commodity: national unity.

The armed insurgence of 1936–1939 and the six-month general strike (the longest in history) were decided and carried out in spite of opposition from the leadership of all the “nationalist” parties. They were widespread and spontaneously organized; this forced the ruling class to join them so as to take over the leadership of the movement. But this was in order to put a check on it, to lead it to the conference table and to reactionary compromises. Only the victory of that uprising in its ultimate consequences could have destroyed both the British Mandate and the Zionist aim of setting up a Jewish state. Its failure heralded the disasters to come and ultimately the defeat of 1948.

This latter defeat tolled the knell for the “bourgeois-feudality” as the leading class of the Arab movement. It was the opportunity for the petty bourgeoisie to come to power and constitute, with the officers of the defeated army, the driving force of the present movement. Its program was simple: unity, a kind of socialist ideology, and the liberation of Palestine (the Return). The Tripartite aggression of 1956 provided it with the best opportunity to consolidate itself as a dominant class and to find a leader-program in the person of Nasser, put forward for the collective admiration of the completely dispossessed Arab masses. He was their religion and their opium. But the new exploiting class had its own interests and autonomous goals. The rallying cries that produced the popularity of the bureaucratic military regime of Egypt were already bad in themselves; in addition, the regime was incapable of carrying them out. Arab unity and the destruction of Israel (invoked successively as the liquidation of the usurper state or as the pure and simple driving of the Israeli population into the sea) were the core of this propaganda-ideology.

What ushered in the decline of the Arab petty bourgeoisie and its bureaucratic power was first of all its own internal contradictions and the superficiality of its options (Nasser, the Baath Party, Kassem and the so-called “Communist” parties have never ceased fighting each other and compromising and allying with the most dubious forces).

Twenty years after the first Palestinian war, this new stratum has just demonstrated its complete incapacity to resolve the Palestinian problem. It has lived by delirious bluff, for it was only able to survive by permanently raising the specter of Israel, being utterly incapable of effecting any radical solution whatsoever to the innumerable internal problems. The Palestinian problem remains the key to the Arab power struggles. It is everyone’s central reference point and all con-

flicts hinge on it.—It is the basis of the objective solidarity of all the Arab regimes. It produces the “Holy Alliance” between Nasser and Hussein, Faisal and Boumedienne, Aref and the Baath.

The latest war has dissipated all these illusions. The absolute rigidity of “Arab ideology” was pulverized on contact with an effective reality that was just as hard but also permanent. Those who spoke of waging a war neither wanted it nor prepared for it, and those who spoke only of defending themselves actually prepared the offensive. Each of the two camps followed their respective propensities: the Arab bureaucracy that for lying and demagoguery, the masters of Israel that for imperialist expansion. It is as a negative element that the Six Day War has had a prime importance: it has revealed all the secret weaknesses and defects of what was presented as the “Arab Revolution.” The “powerful” military bureaucracy of Egypt crumbled to dust in two days, disclosing all at once the secret *reality* of its achievements: the fact that the axis around which all the socioeconomic transformations took place—the Army—has remained fundamentally the same. On one hand, it claimed to be changing everything in Egypt (and even in the Arab world as a whole), and on the other, it did everything to avoid any transformation in itself, in its values or its habits. Nasser’s Egypt is still dominated by pre-Nasser forces; its bureaucracy is a conglomeration without coherence or class consciousness, united only by exploitation and the division of the social surplus-value.

As for the politico-military apparatus that governs Baathist Syria, it is entrenching itself more and more in the extremism of its ideology. But its phraseology takes in no one anymore (except Pablo!): everyone knows that it did not fight and that it gave up the front without resistance because it preferred to keep its best troops in Damascus for its own defense. Those who consumed 65% of the Syrian budget to defend the territory have definitively unmasked their own cynical lies.

Finally, the war has shown, to those who still needed showing, that Holy Alliance with someone like Hussein can only lead to disaster. The Arab Legion [Jordanian Army] withdrew on the first day and the Palestinian population, which has suffered for twenty years under its police terror, found itself without arms or organization in the face of the Israeli occupation forces. Since 1948 the Hashemite throne had shared the colonization of the Palestinians with the Zionist state. By deserting the West Bank it gave the Israelis the police files on all the Palestinian revolutionary elements. But the Palestinians have always known that there was no great difference between the two colonizations, and the blatancy of the new occupation at least makes the terrain of resistance clearer.

As for Israel, it has become everything that the Arabs had accused it of before the war: an imperialist state behaving like the most classic occupation forces (police terror, dynamiting of houses, permanent martial law, etc.). Internally a collective hysteria, led by the rabbis, is developing around the “ironclad right of Israel to its Biblical borders.” The war put a stop to the whole movement of internal struggles generated by the contradictions of this artificial society (in 1966 there were several dozen riots, and there were no fewer than 277 strikes in 1965 alone) and provoked unanimous support for the objectives of the ruling class and its most extremist ideology. It also served to shore up all the Arab regimes not involved in the armed struggle. Boumedienne could thus, from 3000 miles away, enter the chorus of political braggadocio and have his name applauded by the Algerian crowd before which he had not even dared to appear the day before; and finally obtain the support of a totally Stalinized ORP (“for his anti-imperialist policy”). Faisal, for a few million dollars, obtained Egypt’s withdrawal from North Yemen and the strengthening of his throne. Etc., etc.

As always, war, when not civil, only freezes the process of social revolution. In North Vietnam it has brought about the peasantry’s support, never before given, for the bureaucracy that exploits it. In Israel it has killed off for a long time any opposition to Zionism; and in the Arab countries it is reinforcing—temporarily—the most reactionary strata. In no way can revolutionary currents find anything there with which to identify. Their task is at the other pole of the present movement since it must be its absolute negation.

It is obviously impossible to seek, at the moment, a *revolutionary* solution to the Vietnam war. It is first of all necessary to put an end to the American aggression in order to allow the real social struggle in Vietnam to develop in a *natural way*; that is to say, to allow the Vietnamese workers and peasants to rediscover their enemies at home: the bureaucracy of the North and all the propertied and ruling strata of the South. The withdrawal of the Americans will mean that the Stalinist bureaucracy will immediately seize control of the whole country: this is the unavoidable conclusion. Because the invaders cannot indefinitely sustain their aggression; ever since Talleyrand it has been a commonplace that one can do anything with a bayonet except sit on it. The point, therefore, is not to give unconditional (or even conditional) support to the Vietcong, but to struggle consistently and without any concessions against American imperialism. The most effective role is presently being played by those American revolutionaries who are advocating and practicing insubordination and draft resistance on a very large scale (compared to which the resistance to the Algerian war in France was child’s play). The Vietnam war is rooted in America and it is from there that it must be rooted out.

Unlike the American war, the Palestinian question has no immediately evident solution. No short-term solution is feasible. The Arab regimes can only crumble under the weight of their contradictions and Israel will be more and more the prisoner of its colonial logic. All the compromises that the great powers try to piece together are bound to be counterrevolutionary in one way or another. The hybrid status quo—neither peace nor war—will probably prevail for a long period during which the Arab regimes will meet with the same fate as their predecessors of 1948 (and probably at first to the profit of the openly reactionary forces). Arab society, which has produced all sorts of dominant classes caricaturing all the classes of history, must now produce the forces that will bring about its total subversion. The so-called national bourgeoisie and the Arab bureaucracy have inherited all the defects of those two classes without ever having known the historical realizations those classes achieved in other societies. The future Arab revolutionary forces which must arise from the ruins of the June 1967 defeat must know that they have nothing in common with any of the existing Arab regimes and nothing to respect among the established powers that dominate the present world. They will find their model in themselves and in the repressed experiences of revolutionary history. The Palestinian question is too serious to be left to the states, that is, to the colonels. It is too close to the two basic questions of modern revolution—*internationalism* and *the state*—for any existing force to be able to provide an adequate solution. Only an Arab revolutionary movement that is resolutely internationalist and anti-state can both dissolve the state of Israel and have on its side that state's exploited masses. And only through the same process will it be able to dissolve all the existing Arab states and create Arab unity through the power of the Councils.

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Anarchists in Israel

Sam Dolgoff

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In the mid-1970s Esther and I embarked on a two-week tour of Israel, not merely to see the sights, but to contact our anarchist comrades publishing their organ *Problemen*. We also wanted to contact Israeli settlers whom we already knew at home. We felt that the trip was all the more necessary because altogether too many comrades did not even know that there were a few anarchist groups in Israel, much less an anarchist publication there.

We immediately contacted the editor of *Problemen*, Joseph Ludin, a prolific writer, himself an anarchist refugee from Poland. Ludin and the comrades were most hospitable. "You are most welcome to stay with us and save hotel bills." We spent some time at Ludin's home in Tel-Aviv where we were informed about the situation in Israel and what our comrades were trying to do. A little later we were escorted to the anarchist center in Tel-Aviv, a good-sized hall with an impressive library of Hebrew, Yiddish and a sprinkling of Russian and Polish literature, a well-equipped kitchen and other conveniences.

It was at the center where we had the pleasure of meeting Dina, the widow of the unforgettable Polish anarchist Eliesor Hirshauge. Dina lived on the premises and took care of the hall. She presented us with an autographed copy of Eliesor's work, *The Anarchist Movement in Poland: Memoirs and Comments*. The little book is really a most important work, a primary source which should be translated into English and other idioms. Dina passed away a few years ago. The center was closed and the books donated to libraries.

While in Israel we were anxious to meet F. Hochhauser Armony, listed in the directory as a "teacher of languages." I greatly enjoyed reading his dispatches and articles in the Spanish anarchist periodicals *Solidaridad Obrera*, *CNT* and other anarchist journals. Armony was a talented and prolific writer who, before coming to Israel, lived in Spain, Portugal, France, Italy and other countries. He and his comrade, Simcha Hamburg, now co-editor of *Problemen*, spent a few hours with us at our hotel in Haifa. Armony was by no means an uncritical Israeli patriot as were so many settlers, but he deeply deplored the attitudes of many anarchists who, while rightfully condemning Israeli nationalism and chauvinism, ignored the atrocities committed by the Arab tyrants against their own subjects. We mourned his death a few years ago.

We noted considerable interest in anarchism in student circles manifested in conversations with students we met at the universities in Haifa and in Tel-Aviv. Ludin, Dina and other comrades informed us that the anarchist center was over-crowded for the occasional discussion meetings. All the young people we talked with violently denounced the outrageous conduct of the fanatical orthodox Jews. In their attitude toward women, their contempt for legal restrictions and traditional conservative attitudes toward sex and parental authority, the

young Israeli rebels are just as, if not more advanced than the young nonconformists elsewhere.

We came across quite a few Israeli imperialists who insisted that Israel should by force of arms reconquer territories which they claimed belonged to Israel thousands of years ago. However, sentiment for peace was so intense that many Israelis would gladly make peace even if further concessions had to be made.

Although Israeli Arabs are entitled to the same legal rights as other Israeli citizens, there are, unfortunately, many Israelis who mistreat their Arab neighbors as “inferior” menials fit only to do the low paid “dirty work” which nobody else wants. They look upon the Arabs somewhat like American racists do negroes. (The Jewish fascist Rabbi Kahane was lately elected to the Israeli legislature, the Knesset.)

We felt better about all this when we visited the Jerusalem studio of our old friend the artist Rohr whom we knew in New York. Rohr is not an anarchist, but his tolerant humanistic attitude impressed us. Rohr maintained that if Israeli Jews were ever to attain good relations with the Arabs here in Israel, their whole attitude toward them must change. They must adopt a truly brotherly attitude toward their Arab neighbors in Israel, learn to live together in mutual esteem and respect as equals.

Rohr did not merely preach, but lived his ideals. He conducted his life in accordance with the noblest libertarian traditions of the pioneers who built the Israeli kibbutzim. When he made his periodic trips to the United States and other countries to sell his paintings (we have a few) and deliver talks about life in Israel, *all* the proceeds went, not to him, but to his kibbutz. Unfortunately we could not accept his invitation to visit his kibbutz. I do not know what happened to him or to his family, but did hear that they suffered a number of misfortunes.

The Israeli Anarchists

Problemen, the first bi-monthly periodical of the Israeli anarchists whose first editor was the Russian Jewish anarchist Abba Gordin (deceased), was originally published in both Yiddish and Hebrew, the official language of Israel. I was told that *Problemen* was no longer published in Hebrew, only in Yiddish, which many, if not most, Israelis did not understand, because there were not enough capable Hebrew anarchist writers and, more importantly, that *Problemen* was really an international periodical: the only surviving Yiddish language paper in the world. In view of this, *Problemen* publishes cultural, historical, literary articles and essays and news of common interest to the former readers of the defunct Yiddish

anarchist papers. Comments on Israeli problems are usually found in the editorial article. There is no official policy or formal statement of principles. Important points are summed up in the following extracts:

Everyone knows that by us in Israel there is no shortage of demagogues and liars. The government ruined the economy, spread chauvinism, reinforced the power of the clergy, sharpened the enmity between us and the Arab people... we deplore the hypocrisy of the Israeli Labor Party. They blame the Begin government for everything, but they have themselves been guilty of the same crimes when they were in power.

We know from our own experience that politicians and diplomats neither will, or can, ever achieve peace between nations. They find it easier to make war than to make peace. A state of peace involves understanding and agreement between peoples, not capitulation of one parry to another. But peace is never made in good faith or without ulterior motives. This is why it would be easier to conclude peace with the Arab people than with their rulers. To achieve this we must renounce ruling the Arab people in Israel, abandon our snobbish attitude, and together with them live in brotherhood.

(In this connection we were impressed by the declaration of an old settler in a kibbutz we visited that the pioneer settlers in Israel were welcomed and assisted by their Arab neighbors *before, not after* the Israeli state was established.)

As far as the eleventh election campaign of both the reactionary and liberal parties to the Knesset is concerned, we know full well that both these parties are ideologically bankrupt, without social vision. Their one aim is the conquest of power. Their party and personal interests are, for them, more important than the interests of the people. Neither one nor the other will solve the difficult problems facing Israel. Neither one nor the other has a constructive social program for the people; obliterate the gulf between the few rich and the many poor or establish peaceful relations with the Arabs living in Israel. Neither one nor the other will, or is able to do away with the bureaucratic state apparatus; end the shameful parliamentary intrigues which are for both blocs necessary to promote their political careers and secure for themselves well paid and privileged posts. Especially tragic for the Israeli masses is the domination of the minority of orthodox religious politicians over the majority of the

people. Their hooligans terrorize the non-religious citizens, stone passing vehicles violating the Sabbath. They connive to obtain for themselves the best well paying job in the state agencies, supporting administrations that give them more. The religious politicians blackmail both the liberal and reactionary parties to grant their demands in exchange for their indispensable support in coalition governments. All this, and more, is why even the most “liberal” parties are, for their own self-interest, unwilling and unable to curtail the power of the ultra-religious well-organized power bloc. This can only be accomplished by organizing free *non-party* people’s clubs to protect them from religious domination.

Unfortunately, the Israeli masses, the only ones able to break up this criminal alliance between the powerful, all-pervasive governmental bureaucracy, the military adventurers, the ultra-reactionary clergy and the capitalists, are psychologically and educationally unable to revolutionize Israeli society. As children they are already indoctrinated to blindly obey their parents, their elders, their “revered leaders.” Later, they are taught never to question the “revealed truths” hammered into their heads by their teachers and their “superiors.” They are taught that for “success in life” they must conform to things as they are, to respect authority- never revolt.

What has become of the libertarian grass-roots people’s movements that flourished *before* the establishment of the Israeli state- the communes, the settlements, the kibbutzim, the cooperatives, the self-managed workers industrial and agricultural enterprises? ... The constructive libertarian institutions are now becoming increasingly corrupted by the cult of state centralization. Now, over thirty years later, we see how heavy a price in freedom of action, in loss of morale, in creativity, in self-management, the Israeli people are paying for their submission to the state; a swollen bureaucracy, the continuing degeneration of the kibbutzim into de facto capitalist enterprises with low-paid wage labor, private property, production for profit and the other “blessings” of capitalism.

In spite of all this, the Israeli comrades are forced, like the other tendencies, to accept the fact that Israel must be defended. The day after the proclamation of the state of Israel (15 May 1948) Assam Pasha, Secretary-General of the Arab League, threatened that: “This will be a war of extermination and momentous

massacres like the Mongolian massacres and the Crusades.” In discussion with Israeli anarchists it was emphasized that the unilateral dismantling of the Israeli state would not at all be anarchistic. It would, on the contrary, only reinforce the immense power of the Arab states and actually expedite their plans for the conquest of Israel.

Israel is a tiny, impoverished land lacking the indispensable military and economic resources to defend itself without outside help. Its very existence depends upon the military, financial and economic support of the United States, and, if need be, its direct military intervention. It is to all intents and purposes reduced to the status of a satellite subject to the control of the United States.

Far from curtailing the concentrated power of the state, the necessity for defense of Israel-freely acknowledged by our comrades- depends upon putting into effect the indispensable military, economic, legislative and social measures needed to keep Israel in a permanent state of war preparation. Such war preparations, instead of lessening, only accelerate the trend toward despotism, the permanent characteristic of every state. The Israeli anarchists (and they are not the only ones, the non-anarchists too) know only too well that curtailing the power of the state under such circumstances offers no real alternative. But they do feel their moral obligation as anarchists to resist as much as they can the growing despotism of the Israeli state.

Since “politicians and dictators” will not, and cannot in good faith, conclude peace with Israel, it would not, as claimed by *Problemen*, be at all easy, but actually *impossible* to consummate peace with the Arab *people*. To achieve a true accord and alliance with the Arab people, the Arab masses would have to defy their rulers by refusing to obey their commands. This the backward, fanatically religious Arab masses, who are by no means more progressive and perhaps more reactionary than their rulers, are not inclined to do. With relatively few honorable exceptions, the majority of Arabs hate the “Israeli invaders.” Under such deplorable circumstances “peace and brotherhood” between Arab and Israeli people is doubtless a laudable but impractical proposal. But it is still their moral obligation, as anarchists, to plant by word of mouth and by example, that voluntary cooperation, mutual aid and solidarity of all peoples in brotherhood must, and can eventually be achieved.

There is no anarchist movement in Israel. If Joseph Ludin could no longer edit the paper, there would be no one to replace him and *Problemen*, the only anarchist paper in Israel, would disappear. Yet the few aging comrades courageously continue to propagandize the necessity for the disappearance of the state, to be replaced by free local, provincial, national and international federations and confederations of free peoples. They know, of course, that our ideal cannot be

realized in the foreseeable future. But for them, the essence of anarchism as a living movement of the people is to stimulate the spirit of revolt and influence movements for the free society in an anarchistic direction.

This is a realistic policy. A small, but growing movement of progressive workers, radical minded students and oppressed feudal agricultural toilers in revolt against political-social-economic despotism is, however faintly, beginning to emerge. Many of these rebels (I met quite a few in American academic circles on my tours) are receptive to anarchist ideas.

Iran is a good example. As I write these lines I read a graphic report by the Iranian militant Alexander Bazarov in the Canadian anarchist journal *Strike!* (February 1985). The headline "STRIKE WAVE SWEEPS IRAN: A CLASS RE-AWAKENS!" refers to a month-long strike of twenty thousand workers in the great iron industry of Ispahan. During the height of the strike, the workers detained the management inside the plants as hostages. This strike was by no means an isolated incident. In the past six months there were a hundred spontaneous rank-and-file workers' strikes.

In another article in the Iranian bimonthly emigre journal *Ezane Azad* (The Free Man) dedicated toward the spread of anarchist ideas among the exiled Iranian community we are informed that "The courageous individuals and groups both inside and outside of Iran continue to organize for the overthrow of religious autocracy."

We left Israel in the hope that the inspiring efforts of the little band of comrades, struggling against such great odds, will be encouraged and sustained.

Retrieved on 2015-07-05 from web.archive.org

This article, from the book "Fragments: a memoir," by Sam Dolgoff (Refract Publications, 1986) recounts a trip to Israel by Sam and his wife Esther, to meet the anarchists t

Attacks on Israel Ignore the Long History of Arab Conflict

Murray Bookchin

May 4, 1986

There is certainly much one can criticize about Israeli policy, particularly under the Likud government which orchestrated the invasion of Lebanon. But the torrent of anti-Israeli sentiment that has surfaced in the local press and the virtual equation of Zionism with anti-Arab racism impels me to reply with some vigor.

For years I had hoped that Israel or Palestine could have evolved into a Swiss-like confederation of Jews and Arabs, a confederation in which both peoples could live peacefully with each other and develop their cultures creatively and harmoniously.

Tragically, this was not to be. The United Nations resolution of 1947, which partitioned Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, was followed by the invasion of the country by Arab armies, notably the Egyptian, Syrian, and highly trained Jordanian "Arab Legion," with direct or indirect aid from Iraq and other Arab nations.

In some cases these armies, particularly the Arab irregulars who accompanied them, took no prisoners in their assaults on Jewish communities. Generally, they tried to systematically obliterate all Jewish settlements in their paths until they were stopped by furious and costly Jewish resistance.

The invasion and the annihilatory combat it created set a terrible pattern of fear and bitterness that is not easy to erase from the minds of Israeli Jews. That a desperate lunatic element of Jewish zealots behaved in kind before it was stopped by the newly formed Israeli military forces should not allow us to

forget the Jewish men and women who were slaughtered by stalwarts of Arab nationalism even after they had raised white flags of surrender.

I have seen very little mention of this fearful pattern of “combat” which stained the Arab invasions of Palestine and so profoundly influenced Jewish confidence in the value of “truce negotiations” and the predictability of peace agreements with Arab irredentists. Indeed, the partition lines that were eventually established after the 1948 invasions were the product of bloody warfare — literally the give-and-take of battle — not of “imperialistic” or “land-grabbing Zionists,” to use the language that is so much in vogue these days.

Nor do I hear any longer of the earnest attempts by the Haganah — the Jewish citizens’ militia of the partition era — to encourage Arabs to remain in their neighborhoods and towns, of the Israeli vehicles with loudspeakers that went through the streets of Jaffa, for example, urging Arabs not to succumb to the feelings of panic engendered by battle conditions and by extremists on both sides of the conflict.

That many Arabs remained in Israel clearly challenges the myth that Israeli Jews tried to rid the country of its Moslem inhabitants. What seems to be totally ignored is the certainty that there would have been an Arab state in Palestine side-by-side with a Jewish one if Egyptian armies in the south, Syrian in the north, and Jordanian in the east had not tried to seize both U.N.-partitioned lands with imperialist interests of their own and, when this failed, used the Palestinian refugees as pawns in future negotiations with the Israelis and their western supporters.

There is another myth that must be removed: that the present volatile situation in the Middle East has its source in Israeli-Palestinian conflicts; indeed, that the relationship between the Jews and Arabs was “beatific” until it was poisoned by “Zionist ambitions.” Leaving aside the simplistic image of Middle East problems that this notion fosters, the extent to which it is a sheer distortion of Jewish-Arab relations in the past verges on the unspeakable.

Are we to forget that Arab persecution of Jews, while less genocidal than European, has a centuries-long history of its own with the exception of Moslem Spain and Ottoman Turkey? That Arab pogroms against the Jews accompanied the Jewish settlement of pre-World War II Palestine, culminating in the extermination of the ages-old Jewish community of Hebron (once the seat of the Hebrew tribal confederacy) in the late 1920s? That the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem in the 1930s (the precursor of Yassar Arafat two generations ago) was an avowed admirer of Hitler and called for a “holy war” of extermination of Palestinian Jews up to and into World War II? That Jordan’s “Arab Legion” systematically leveled

the old Jewish quarter of Jerusalem in 1948 and stabled horses at the Western Wall of Herod's Temple, defiling the most sacred place of world Judaism?

Are we to forget that General Hafez Assad, the so-called "president" of Syria (elected by a "majority" of 99.97 percent of the Syrian "electorate") slaughtered between 6,000–10,000 people in Kama in February 1982, for daring to challenge his leadership of the country?

One wonders why there was no storm of protest when Amnesty International in 1983 declared that "Syrian security forces have practiced systematic violations of human rights, including torture and political killings, and have been operating with impunity under the country's emergency laws"? Why is there no concern over Syrian imperialism notably Assad's fantasy of absorbing Lebanon and Palestine, including Israel, if you please, into a Syrian Empire — a goal every objective expert on the Middle East knows to be Assad's Arabic version of Rabbi Kahane's insane version of a "Greater Israel" — a notion that has been vigorously denounced by responsible Jewish and Zionist organizations in Israel and abroad?

If the "core problem" of the Middle East, to use Miriam Ward's words in her Vermont Perspective of April 27, is the confiscation of Palestinian land by Israel, what would the whole area look like if Israel and its Jewish population magically disappeared from the scene? Would Syria be less of a police state than it is today and would its Sunni Moslem majority feel less dominated, exploited, and manipulated by General Assad, who tends to speak for the Alawite Moslem minority of the country?

Would Saudi princes cease to squander much of their country's wealth on limousines, palaces, jewels, and real estate abroad, much less bring a modicum of freedom to their own people at home? Would Egyptian landowners, living in lavish opulence amidst incredible squalor, return a fraction of their landholdings to a starved Egyptian peasantry? Would Iraq free its Kurdish population, to speak only of its most vocal and rebellious minorities, or meet their demands for genuine equal autonomy?

Would the Iraq-Iran war come to an end, a war that has already claimed a million lives in the past few years? Would Colonel Khadafy cease to be a strutting militarist who has been trying to eat away at the territories of many of his neighbors? Would Khomeini and Moslem fundamentalism, whose main thrust is against any form of modernity and western culture, give equality to women and freedom to critics of Iran's present-day theocratic regime?

What is so disquieting about many persistent attacks on Israel is that they help to completely obfuscate what is really a "core problem" of the Palestinian people. This abandoned people is being used in the most unconscionable manner by the

Arab states to conceal deep-seated economic, social, and cultural problems in their own lands and in the Middle East as a whole. That the differences between the Israelis and Palestinians have to be resolved equitably such that both people can live with a sense of security that resolves their fears of what has happened in the past and achieve a constructive harmony with each other goes without saying.

I am not sure what that solution will be. But it certainly will not be achieved by acts of PLO-related terrorism against independently minded Arab mayors who are trying to negotiate a settlement between the two peoples at one end of the spectrum or lunatics like Rabbi Kahane at the other end who are trying to expel the Palestinians from their landholdings and communities.

But crucial as such a settlement surely is, we should not bury the real “core problem” of the Middle East as embodied by its cynical politicians, landowners, oil barons, military juntas, fanatic clerics, and imperialistic predators in the welter of tragic problems that have emerged between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

Given this background, it would be wise to remember that both peoples have more interests in common than they have differences. It would be a splendid example of political independence if people who raise a justifiable hue about military juntas in Latin America would remind themselves that they are confronted with an exact parallel in the Middle East — from Colonel Khadafy to General Assad.

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No justice, no peace!

Yossi Wolfson

1995

Introduction by B.M.

“The thought that we could end the bloodshed without doing justice to the (Palestinians) is not only malicious, but a dangerous illusion. The “peace process” is trying to do precisely that... That is why I’m against it.”

In late 1994 a young Israeli anarchist named Yossi Wolfson wrote an opinion column in a local punk fanzine, describing why he opposes the so-called peace process, the “Oslo Agreements”. He had better understanding of reality than any of the senior “political experts” at the time, combined.

Many Palestinians, of course, expressed these views in real time as well, but among the “Israeli Left”, and even the radical left, these ideas were extremely rare at the time.

30 years later, I can definitely say in retrospect that Wolfson was spot on in his criticism, so I thought I’d share. Following is the full text, translated from Hebrew. It was published in the underground anarcho-punk fanzine “War of Words”, issue 2, 1995.

No justice, no peace!

I’m against the peace process. It’s been more than a year since the Washington Agreement, and I think we need to reevaluate our position. And I’m against it. It’s not that I don’t see positive developments. Surely I don’t miss Shamir as prime minister, when new settlements kept being erected and the IDF was patrolling in Jabalia refugee camp. There’s no more night curfew in Gaza, that’s already a good thing, and not the only one. And still, I’m against it. Thousands of Palestinians are still being held in Israeli prisons. The closure is preventing the people from Gaza and the West Bank from getting work and providing for their families. Anyone trying to enter for work can get arrested and fined. Recently there were a few cases where the IDF killed some of these “infiltrators”. Mass arrests in the West Bank continue. The Shin Bet continues with its torture tactics, and now it is also being joined by a Palestinian Shin Bet. Home demolitions have restarted, and land expropriation never stopped – not to mention that no piece of land has been returned to its rightful owners. And also the violence hasn’t stopped, every week there are more people injured and killed.

They say it’s a process and that we need to give it a chance, and that things can only get better. A year ago they said: we’re on our way to victory. Now I think

it's time to sober up. Things are going the opposite way. Even before the elections Rabin was clear about his platform: let's build a fence around Gaza and let them rot. So he said and so he did. The Palestinian Authority has relieved Israel of its responsibilities towards the people of Gaza. Finally we don't have to worry about (or pay for) their health and education (not that we did a lot for them before). The Palestinian Authority takes care of keeping the peace. We didn't give up a single Israeli interest – either real or imagined. We control the population registry, entry to and exit from Gaza, we keep the settlements, set building regulations and I could go on. And regarding those little concessions we committed to, we are mostly trying to deflect them: for example, the promise to remove military forces from population centers before the election.

Rabin wants to maintain all military advantages but do away with the burden of keeping the peace. And what does Peres want? Peres has a grand vision of a New Middle East. His vision gives a central role to huge multinational corporations. Let's turn the Middle East into a free market, with capital moving freely. Of course, the workers will remain caged in their places. Nobody wants Arabs in the middle of Tel Aviv, right? The big companies will get cheap labor and make their profits. And what about the Middle East?

Arafat's aspirations also don't give me great hopes. He founded a new military rule in the (1967-occupied Palestinian) territories, with him as the top ruler, surrounded by a multitude of all-powerful generals. Human rights are not being upheld. There are limits on free press. And his arm is being twisted behind his back by Israel. A year ago, I had the illusion that political processes can undo evil. Now it seems they mostly replace one evil by another. Instead of the occupation they are now creating a banana republic that is dependent on Israel. This new state of affairs has advantages and disadvantages. In the bottom line, though, the Palestinians will continue being screwed, sometimes even more screwed than before. And the Israeli "left" and global public opinion will no longer help them. As far as they're concerned the problem's been solved. There's a "peace process", the Nobel prizes have already been awarded, so what if children are hungry, prisoners are left to rot, and people need a double permit if they want to visit Cairo – not only from the Israeli authorities (and Shin Bet) as before, but now also from the "independent" Palestinian Authority.

The Israeli-Palestinian problem is not, in its essence, a problem of war and peace. This is not a cycle of revenge killings, started in ancient history, which perpetuates itself into the present. Not at all. The Israeli-Palestinian problem is a problem of justice, or more precisely of injustice. An injustice that is still ongoing in the prisons, the refugee camps in Palestine and beyond, and in the everyday lives of millions. The thought that we could end the bloodshed without doing

justice to the workers, to the refugees of all the wars, to the farmers who are left without land or water, to the political prisoners – this thought is not only malicious. It is a dangerous illusion. Making peace is about allowing two sides to forgive each other for past injustices and to start a new path. But as long as the injustice is not a thing of the past, there's no chance (and also no justification) for the demand that Palestinians should lay down their weapons.

The peace process is trying to do precisely that: to achieve a peace that is inseparable from continuing the injustice. That is why I'm against it. I'm aware of the limitations of a process that is directed from the top by political leaders, which is why it's hard for me to offer alternatives in the form of a general resolution. I still dream, in moments of weakness, of a two-state solution, but after Oslo I no longer believe that there's any kind of diplomatic solution that could help the common folk. I'm not saying we should call it quits. On the contrary, we must snap out of our euphoria and go back to protest. I don't expect Rabin, Peres, Arafat or Clinton to provide me with a solution. But I can demand the end of specific injustices: demand the release of prisoners, protest the closure, demand elections now, persuade the Israeli public that Palestinian East Jerusalem is, in fact, Palestinian. I can, in short, continue to serve as a leftist opposition to the regime. Because the biggest disaster resulting from this fake peace process is that the leftist opposition in Israel has pretty much decided to take a break and stop fighting.

<https://twitter.com/ireallyhateyou/status/1853520660242350567> ("War of Words", Issue #2)

Translated from Hebrew to English by B.M. aka @ireallyhateyou1948 on Twitter.

The Jewish Caste in Palestine

Adam Sabra

1995

The development of a Zionist state in Palestine has presented a number of problems of interpretation, especially for theorists of the left. The Zionist movement combines elements of “laborism” and colonialism at the same time. This apparent paradox has led observers to classify Israel as anything from settler-colonialist to social democratic. Clearly, the traditional modes of analysis, while shedding some light on the problem, have failed to provide a sufficient framework for the task at hand.

It will be argued in what follows that the best way of understanding the development of Zionism is through the use of the concept of a Jewish “caste” or “race.”¹ This caste does not represent a prior existing social form, but rather refers to the historical construction, even invention, of a Jewish caste, calling itself a nation, which excludes the indigenous Palestinian Arab population. The invention of this caste has had a profound effect on the politics, economy, and culture of Palestine. This article will attempt to frame these effects in their historical development. Only once the development of the Jewish caste is understood can efforts be directed towards its abolition. In this light, the fatal weaknesses of the current attempts at repartitioning Palestine become brutally apparent.

The Zionist movement originated in the late 19th century as a response to the changes then occurring in European societies. As these changes proceeded, European Jews found themselves caught up in the rapid shifts of social and political order. The crumbling of old institutions and ideas sometimes gave them unparalleled opportunities for social advancement and integration, but often resulted in the destruction of traditional communities, either through response to social change or through the rise of Anti-Semitism.

The experiences of European Jews differed from most other Europeans in two important aspects: class and nation. Since these two concepts were the basis of the new political order, it is worth taking a closer look at these questions.

Jews had differed from their neighbors for some time when it came to class.² While most of their neighbors were peasants, Jews were overwhelmingly non-agricultural. They were concentrated in the trades and in “middle man” jobs such as commerce and tax collecting. These positions often left them stranded between the aristocracy, which made use of them when possible, and the peas-

¹ The author regards the terms “caste” and “race” as synonymous. Both refer to non-biological, historically constructed entities. In view of the long-standing use of the term “Jewish Race” in Anti-Semitic rhetoric, the author prefers to use the term “caste” in order to avoid any form of misunderstanding.

² See Abram Leon, *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation* (New York 1970).

antry, for whom they were often the face of oppression in the form of tax men and usurers.

As feudalism collapsed in eastern Europe, the tensions between Jews and their neighbors increased, and the Jews were increasingly impoverished. Anti-Semitism reached new heights, and many Jews thought they could do better in the West, where their co-religionists were better integrated into society. As these East European Jews moved westward, Anti-Semitism gained currency in the West, much as modern European rightists have responded to the rise of immigrant labor by appealing to racism.

Here the question of nation became paramount.³ The rise of the nation-state had made natural the idea that each “people,” a term for which there is no consistent definition, had to have a state of its own. Jews, having always considered themselves a “people” in a religious sense, became a people without a state. As racial nationalism became increasingly popular, Jews came to be seen as not only religious outsiders, but also national and racial outsiders.

RACIAL THINKING: ZIONISM AND ANTI-SEMITISM

Zionism grew precisely out of these dilemmas of class and nation. One early Zionist, Leo Pinsker, responded to Russian pogroms by writing, “Judeo-phobia is a psychic aberration. As a psychic aberration, it is hereditary, and as a disease transmitted for two thousand years it is incurable.”⁴ Thus, the specific historical and political problem of Anti-Semitism was converted into an existential dilemma. Like any good nationalist of his era, Pinsker knew the solution for his embattled people: a state of their own. Such speculations were not limited to East Europeans. Theodor Herzl, popularly known as the father of Zionism, reacted to the Dreyfuss Affair in France by adopting the slogan of a Jewish state as the solution to the problem of Anti-Semitism. That an assimilated French Jew could be convicted of treason on flimsy charges had a great effect on Herzl’s vision of the future of European Jewry. He wrote, “Every nation in whose midst Jews live is, either covertly or openly, Anti-Semitic.”⁵ Rejecting the attempts of assimilated Jews to solve the problem of Anti-Semitism within their own soci-

³ For an overview of this question, see Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York 1951).

⁴ Cited in Nathan Weinstock, *Zionism: False Messiah* (London 1979), p. 44.

⁵ Theodor Herzl, *A Jewish State: An Attempt at a Modern Solution of the Jewish Question* (New York 1917), p. 8.

eties, Herzl concluded that the Jewish Question (as it was then called) could only be solved along national lines, that is, by the creation of a Jewish state.

In this defeatist attitude towards bigotry, and in the adoption of a nationalist program for a religious group lacking the geographic basis for a national state, Herzl, like many who were to follow him, simply adopted many of the claims made by Anti-Semites against Jews. First, he rejected any attempt to solve the problem experienced by Jews within their own European societies. Second, he accepted the view that Jews were strangers within these societies, and could only liberate themselves by leaving these societies and establishing a separate state elsewhere, preferably in Palestine.

Labor Zionists, such as David Ben Gurion, would go even further than this in responding to the claims of the Anti-Semites. Where Herzl treated Jewish emancipation solely as a national question, they attempted to address the class aspects of the question as well. Thus, for Ben Gurion, it was not the immigration of Jewish capitalists that would make Palestine a Jewish society, but rather the influx of Jewish workers.⁶ In one sense, the “normalization” of Jewish social existence was a response, therefore, to ideological conditions.

The early Zionists were in constant debate with Anti-Semitic demagogues, even adopting the picture these demagogues drew of the Jews as their model of what had gone wrong. The most damning case of such a convergence of views occurred in Nazi-Occupied Hungary. Dr. Rudolf Kastner, representing Zionist interests, negotiated the immigration of some of Hungary’s most prominent Jews to Palestine in exchange for his help in arranging the orderly deportation of the remainder of Hungarian Jewry to the concentration camps.⁷ The Nazi functionary Adolf Eichmann saw this agreement as more than just an opportunistic political arrangement. He saw Kastner as an “idealist,” like himself, dedicated to national ideals, without regard to the suffering of lesser people.⁸ Thus, the congruence of racist and Zionist ideals was more than just coincidence, it was the consequence of the assimilation of nation and race.

⁶ Mitchell Cohen, *Zion and State: Nation, Class, and the Shaping of Modern Israel* (Oxford 1987), p. 125.

⁷ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York 1963), p. 42. The similarities in Zionist and Anti-Semitic thinking are clear with regard to “Diaspora” Jews, including survivors of the Nazi concentration camps. See, for example, Ben Gurion’s statement, “Among the survivors of the German concentration camps, there were those who, had they not been what they were—harsh, evil, and egotistical people—would not have survived, and all they endured rooted out every good part of their souls.” Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust* (New York 1993), pp. 118–9.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 42, p. 60.

Ultimately, however, the development of Zionist ideology was determined by the relationship of the Zionists to one factor that had nothing to do with the ongoing debates about Anti-Semitism within the Jewish communities of Europe, and in Europe in general. The proponents of the Jewish “new man” found themselves face to face with the Palestinian Arabs.

When the first Jewish immigrants began to arrive in Palestine in the 1880s, the task of setting up a purely Jewish society must have seemed absurd to any outside observer. As late as 1907, Arthur Ruppin, an official of the World Zionist Organization, reported that Jews only made up approximately 80,000 out of a population of 700,000 inhabitants.⁹ Furthermore, the indigenous Arab population was growing due to a rise in life expectancy. At the same time, Jews owned only 1.5 percent of the land.¹⁰ Massive Jewish immigration, which began in the 1920s and accelerated during the 1930s due to the rise of Nazism, raised the Jewish population to approximately one-third of the total population, owning seven percent of the land by 1948, when the State of Israel was declared.¹¹ How then could a purely Jewish society be constructed in Palestine?

BUILDING THE JEWISH CASTE

The Zionists had one major factor working in their favor. After the defeat and collapse of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, Britain occupied and received a League of Nations mandate for Palestine. Despite the success of other Arab nations in achieving independence during the 1920s, the British, often with help from the Zionists, continued to maintain control over Palestine until after the Second World War, when the Zionist-Arab conflict made British rule impossible. Despite the later falling out of these erstwhile allies, a process that began in 1939 when Britain tried to limit Jewish immigration to placate Arab opinion during the war, the success of the Zionist colonization project depended on the British umbrella. Without the presence of an imperial power committed to the building

⁹ Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor, and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Cambridge 1989), p. 43.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 43.

¹¹ Exact figures are impossible to come by due to the prevalence of illegal immigration and land purchase through third parties. For the best available figures see Walid Khalidi (ed.), *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem Until 1948* (Washington 1971), pp. 841–3.

of a “Jewish national home” in Palestine, the indigenous population could never have been forced to accept continued Zionist colonization.¹²

Meanwhile, the Zionists had been experimenting with different forms of colonization. Beginning in 1882, Zionist settlers coming from Eastern Europe were receiving financial support from Baron Rothschild to build a plantation system in Palestine along the model used by the French in Algeria. The idea was to use cheap local labor to establish areas of commercial agricultural production. While the settlers borrowed techniques from local Arab farmers, who had much more experience in farming the lands, the new settlements were based on totally different agricultural relations from those of the Arab peasants, which were primarily oriented towards subsistence agriculture.¹³ Capitalist agriculture replaced a subsistence economy.

The result was predictable. While some Jews worked in the plantations, the overall effect was to equate class and caste. Jews managed the property, while Arabs worked it. While this pattern was not uncommon in other colonial societies, in Palestine the colonizers sought to found a society based on colonized labor. When later immigrants influenced by socialist ideas arrived, they were disgusted by the maintenance of Jews as a nonworking minority in Palestine. More to the point, it became clear that a specifically Jewish society could not be based on Arab labor. Jews would have to create their own institutions if they were to build a state in Palestine. The Arabs would have to be excluded.¹⁴

The problem of building a Jewish society among an overwhelming Arab majority came to be known as the “conquest of land and labor.” In effect, in order to build Jewish institutions, the normal relations of capitalist production had to be circumvented. Land, once purchased, had to remain in Jewish hands. No offer made by an Arab could be allowed to break up the acquisition of land for the “Jewish people.” This point was of particular importance since the other half of this project, known as Labor Zionism, was the exclusive use of Jewish labor on the land acquired by the Jews in Palestine. The Labor Zionists maintained this dual exclusionism (or apartheid, as we would now call it) in order to build up purely Jewish institutions.

¹² Britain committed itself to supporting the Zionist movement in the Balfour Declaration of 1917. The British were so apprehensive about the Arab reaction to this document that they did not allow it to be published in Palestine.

¹³ Shafir, pp. 50–52.

¹⁴ As early as 1906, David Ben Gurion insisted on the need to organize Jewish labor, while at the same time excluding Arab labor. This position was opposed by more conventional left wing Jews who wanted to organize all labor in Palestine. Weinstock, p. 87.

In the case of the conquest of the land, the Zionists formed a very powerful instrument to force compliance on Jewish landholders. Land was not acquired by individuals, but by a corporation, known as the Jewish National Fund (JNF). The JNF acquired land and leased it only to Jews, who were not allowed to sublet it.¹⁵ Thus land was acquired in the name of “the Jewish people,” held for their use, and not subject to market conditions. The idea was for the JNF to gradually acquire as much land as possible as the basis for the expected Jewish state.

Naturally, in order for the land to serve this function, Arab labor had to be excluded. Thus, leases from the JNF specifically prohibited the use of non-Jewish labor on JNF plots.¹⁶ One way to achieve this goal was to lease land only to those Jews who intended to work the land themselves. In some cases, when land was bought from Arab absentee landlords, the peasants who resided on and worked the land were expelled. Jewish landholders who refused to exclude Arab labor could lose their leases or be faced with a boycott.

The conquest of labor not only pertained to agriculture, but also to industry. The Labor Zionists formed an institution to organize Jewish labor and exclude Arabs: the Histadrut. The Histadrut was (and largely is) an all-Jewish trade union providing its members with a number of services. More importantly, the Histadrut was a means of segregating Arab and Jewish labor, and especially of protecting the latter from competition in the labor market. Since the Arab workers were accustomed to a lower wage scale and standard of living, competition from them threatened to lower the wages of Jewish laborers. Furthermore, if the wage markets for Arab and Jewish workers were equalized, employers would employ both indiscriminately.

The Histadrut aimed at forcing Jewish employers to hire only Jewish labor to the exclusion of Arab labor. Thus, Jewish wages would remain high, and a strictly Jewish economic sector would come into being. Even when Arab and Jewish laborers performed precisely the same job, Jewish workers were paid significantly higher salaries.¹⁷ These policies not only alienated Arab laborers, some of whom had already been displaced by Jewish land purchases, they also were the death knell for any attempt to organize labor on a non-racial basis. The “laborism” of Labor Zionism killed and continues to kill any and all efforts at building a unified labor movement based on the premise that Arab and Jewish workers both suffer from capitalist exploitation. In exchange for the privileges of membership in

¹⁵ Walter Lehn with Uri Davis, *The Jewish National Fund* (London 1988), p. 27.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 59.

¹⁷ Shafir, p. 64 shows pay ratios approaching 2 to 1.

the Jewish caste, Jewish workers turn their back on the possibilities of unified struggle.

It should be emphasized that the depredations of Labor Zionism are not merely matters of work conditions or salary. For example, the demand for exclusively Jewish labor on Jewish-owned property led to the expulsion of Arab watchmen in Jewish-owned vineyards in Palestine. The paramilitary Jewish forces who replaced them became the basis for the construction of the Haganah, the main Jewish military force which participated in the establishment of the Israeli state and the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian civilians from their homes. The descendent of the Haganah, the Israeli Defense Forces, continues its occupation of Palestine and other lands to this day. It should be clear from this sequence of events that what is at stake is not merely inter-ethnic competition over jobs and wages, but a struggle to control and direct the building of a nation-state. The invention of the Jewish caste from the different immigrant groups has always fundamentally been based on the subjugation of the Palestinian Arabs.

STATE AND CASTE

The establishment of the “Jewish” society was not accomplished peacefully. As Jewish immigration into Palestine increased, so did Palestinian resistance. Open civil war broke out in the years 1936–39, and the British were only able to defeat the Arab revolt by using brutal measures in collaboration with Zionist forces. When the Zionists were ready to make their bid for statehood in 1948, the British were only too happy to escape from Palestine, while the Arabs were defeated and demoralized by years of oppression.

The Zionists were not satisfied with the construction of a state; they knew they had to rid themselves of the Arab majority in order to have a specifically Jewish state. More than half a million Arabs fled their homes in 1948–49, either to escape the war zone, or else due to pressure from the Israeli forces. Some went to neighboring Arab countries, others became refugees in their own country.

At this point, the brazenly racist policies of the Israeli state became apparent. As Uri Davis has pointed out, these policies were contained in two laws passed in 1950. The first, the Law of Return, permitted any Jew, anywhere in the world, the right to “return” to Israel. This right did not apply to non-Jews, including the Palestinian Arabs who had recently become refugees.¹⁸ In addition, the Absentee

¹⁸ Uri Davis, *Israel: An Apartheid State* (London 1987), p. 9.

Property Law confiscated the property of Arab “absentees,” and turned it over to the Custodian of Absentee Property.¹⁹ Arab refugees within their own country were termed “present absentees” (what a phrase!), but not allowed to return to their property. A number of refugees who attempted to do so were termed “infiltrators,” and some were shot in the attempt. Confiscated property accounted for as much as 95 percent of all agricultural land in Israel, and the vast majority of new settlements.²⁰

These confiscated lands, in accordance with the procedures that were established in the Mandate period by the JNF, have become Israel Lands, with their own administration. This administration, controlling 92.6 percent of all of the lands in Israel, only leases these lands to Jews.²¹ Apartheid is thus practiced by dividing lands between those belonging to the state, and only available for Jews, and those in private ownership, primarily in the hands of Arabs.

This situation has only been aggravated by the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 1967. Along with the usual land confiscations and streams of refugees that accompanied the war and the subsequent military administration, the Palestinian labor force of the territories has become increasingly tied to Israeli capital. While Israeli Arabs have increasingly moved from unskilled to semi-skilled positions (still at the bottom of the Israeli ladder), the Arab residents of the “Occupied Territories” have remained stuck in the lowest skill level jobs.²² In 1982, 35.9 percent of European Jews had professional or managerial jobs, as opposed to 13.1 percent of Asian-African Jews, 11.4 percent of Israeli Arabs, and 0.8 percent of Non-Citizen Arabs.²³ The continued exploitation of Arab laborers in construction, agriculture, service industries, and menial labor indicates the caste nature of the labor market. This exploitation continues despite the massive increase in levels of education among Palestinian Arabs as a whole. Young people trained as engineers and computer scientists must find work abroad (and perhaps never come back), or submit to exclusion from their chosen fields and work in whatever jobs they can find available.

As the above statistics reveal, however, all is not well within the Jewish caste either. Jews have been divided into two ethnic groups: Ashkenazi and Sephardi. These terms are composites for Jews of European and Asian or African origins, respectively. While each term originally stood for a specific Jewish community (in

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 18.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 20.

²¹ Ibid, pp. 58–60.

²² Moshe Semyonov and Noah Lewin-Epstein, *Hewers of Wood and Drawers of Water: Noncitizen Arabs in the Israeli Labor Market* (Ithaca 1987), pp. 22–3.

²³ Ibid, pp. 22–3. The question of stratification within the Jewish caste is discussed below.

Central and Eastern Europe or Spain), they have become terms for groups within Israeli society which are largely mutually exclusive. The European Jews have consistently treated their Oriental co-religionists with racist contempt. Jews who arrived from Iraq in the early days of the Israeli state were sprayed with DDT to kill whatever insects they might have brought with them.²⁴ Similar contempt has been shown for the persons and cultures of Moroccan and Yemeni Jews, and, more recently, for Ethiopians.

The Oriental Jews have also found themselves discriminated against in the labor market. Few are in professional or managerial jobs, while many are concentrated in the agricultural, construction, textile, and metal industries.²⁵ They are generally concentrated in working class development towns, many of which are located near Israel's disputed borders with its Arab neighbors. Consequently, they are very security-conscious. Questions of security in addition to competition with cheaper Arab labor make them quite hawkish on military issues, a classic "poor white" mentality. Like poor whites in other racist societies, the Oriental Jews are found in disproportionate numbers in the police and military services, jobs which offer some opportunity for advancement. While most of the Israeli political elite is Ashkenazi, a few Oriental Jews, such as former Likud minister David Levy, have made places for themselves in the Israeli political structure. Large numbers of Oriental Jews vote regularly for the "religious parties," many of which make ethnic gains a priority.

Oriental Jews are doubly discriminated against in the schools. First, they are given distinctly inferior schools, within their local communities. Fewer of them obtain higher, or even high school, education, and many drop out.²⁶ Second, a concerted effort has been made by the Ashkenazi officials to defame non-European Jewish culture. Given the hostility of the Jewish caste towards the Palestinian Arabs, it is not surprising that Arab Jews, that is, Jews from Arab countries, are never referred to as such. But the school authorities have gone further than that. Speaking of "cultural deprivation," they have tried to force a "modern," i. e. Ashkenazi identity, on the Oriental children.²⁷

In the early 1970s, young Oriental Jews responded to this degradation by forming a protest group called the Black Panthers, based on the example set by the Black Power group in the United States. They likened their condition to that of racially oppressed minorities elsewhere and called for changes in government policy. Eventually, the protests broke down, and the leaders were

²⁴ Ilan Halevi, *A History of the Jews: Ancient and Modern* (London 1987), p. 204.

²⁵ Shlomo Swirsky, *Israel: the Oriental Majority* (London 1989), pp. 9–16.

²⁶ Halevi, pp. 24–6.

²⁷ Swirsky, pp. 26–8.

co-opted by the government. Furthermore, during the last twenty-five years, the political fate of the Oriental Jews has improved somewhat.

The exclusion of the Oriental Jews was in no small part due to their being blocked out of the solidly Ashkenazi Labor alliance. In 1977, a Likud government came to power for the first time, largely on the back of Oriental votes. While outside observers primarily noted the hawkish politics of Menachim Begin and his cohorts, many of their followers were more interested in breaking out of their exclusion from power than they were in foreign policy.

In fact, the two positions are closely connected. The seizure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (which the Likud still vows to keep) has made it necessary to further secure the loyalty of Oriental Jews. Some have made their way into the entrepreneurial class, especially in the service industries. Land east of Jerusalem has been used to build comparatively cheap housing which has proved a boon to many young families. While the current Israeli government is happy to turn over the administration of the Gaza Strip to the Palestine Liberation Organization, it has little incentive to do the same with other territories on which Jewish settlement is more dense. In addition, free access for Israelis to Palestinian labor and markets has been a prerequisite of any Israeli agreement to the extension of Palestinian authority in Gaza and Jericho.

THE IDEOLOGY OF CASTE AND ITS ABOLITION

As we have seen in the case of the Jewish National Fund's campaign to acquire land in Palestine, the basic ideological precondition of Zionist settlement has been the notion that the state is the property of the Jewish people. Whether in immigration law, housing, or political rights, being a Jew in Israel means having a certain set of privileges which signify one's membership in the caste that possesses the state.²⁸ Naturally, there are cracks in the foundation of the unity of this caste. The Oriental Jews, as victims of discrimination and members of the Jewish caste, illustrate the contradictions inherent in the mythical unity of the Jewish people. Despite these contradictions, the Zionist leadership must maintain the illusion, if not always the reality, of shared interests and opinions.

Perhaps the best example of this attempt to speak for the entirety of the Jewish people, whether in Israel or elsewhere, was the Israeli response to the Nazi

²⁸ It is worth noting that Israeli ID cards do not list "Israeli" as a nationality. Religion and nationality are listed together, as either "Jewish", or, for example, "Sunni Muslim Arab". Thus, no legal barrier prevents the denial of citizenship rights to non-Jews or, for that matter, to Jews whose credentials are rejected by the Israeli state. See Davis, pp. 26–32.

atrocities against the Jews during World War II. The Israeli government not only set up “the” Holocaust memorial, they managed to obtain millions of dollars in compensation from the West German government. Israel’s greatest claim to inherit the grievances of the Jewish victims of the Nazis came, however, in the abduction and trial of the Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann in 1961.

As the philosopher Karl Jaspers pointed out at the time of the trial, Eichmann, who was charged with “crimes against the Jewish people,” should have been charged with crimes against humanity, and tried before an international tribunal.²⁹ Instead, the Israeli state chose to carry out the trial in the name of the Jewish people. While many explanations have been given for this choice, one can only conclude that it was of a fundamentally political nature. Israel needed to establish itself in the eyes of the world, and of world Jewry, as the sole representative of the Jewish people. The constant references to the Nazi atrocities are less the product of the needs of a particular constituency (the majority of Israelis are not of European descent and have no direct connection with those events), than of the desire of the Israeli state to present the unified face of world Jewry in a Zionist guise. Calls for the defense of Israel are carried out with the slogan “never again!,” as if the defense of Zionism were the only alternative to Anti-Semitic genocide.

This attempt by the Israeli leadership to represent world Jewry also takes other forms. One form is the fetish of history, that is, Jewish history. As G. W. Bowersock, an expert on the Near East in the classical period, has noted, “the politics of archaeology are everywhere.”³⁰ Biblical archaeology is regularly used to buttress “Jewish” claims to the land (i. e. to a historical presence on it), while archaeology of the Arab periods is slighted, and finds that bring into question the historical authenticity of the biblical account are suitably reinterpreted. The history of the land of Israel is the history of the Jewish people exclusively. *[Editors’ interjection: the Israeli state’s effort to establish itself as the sole representative of world Jewry produces ironies. In December 1991, forty-three Soviet Jewish emigrants who had sought asylum in Holland were captured and, with the assistance of dogs, forcibly put on a plane to Israel—at the behest of the Israeli government. About fifty more remained hiding in the town of Eindhoven, evoking memories of World War II, when the Dutch hid Jews from the Nazis. (Dec. 20, 1992 Jewish weekly Forward, cited in Middle East LABOR BULLETIN, Winter-Spring 1992.) The sight of*

²⁹ Arendt, *Eichmann*, pp. 269–70.

³⁰ G. W. Bowersock, “Palestine: Ancient History and Modern Politics,” Edward W. Said and Christopher Hitchens (eds.), *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question* (London 1988), p. 185.

police in Europe setting dogs on Jews must chill the blood of any opponent of Anti-Semitism.]

It should be noted, however, that the ideological veneer is not unbroken. One major controversy that has shaken attempts to homogenize Jewish life in Israel is the “who is a Jew?” controversy. While this controversy has a long and complicated history, what is basically at stake is citizenship rights in Israel, that is, membership in the Jewish caste. Secularists treat the essence of Jewishness as a national question, while religious Jews treat the subject as a religious question. As the matter stands, no solution has been found. Religious Jews have increasingly managed to have religious definitions incorporated into the Law of Return, and civil law in areas such as marriage are only accepted if they conform to Orthodox Jewish law.³¹ This confusion has led to some bizarre attempts to find some historical unity for the Jewish people. For example, some Israeli scientists have attempted to prove that Jews have genetically distinct features, the result of a common genetic origin. As Roselle Tekiner has pointed out, these efforts, of dubious scientific validity, are nothing more than an attempt to reconstruct the idea of a Jewish “race,” the old weapon of the anti-Semites.³² The fact that Israelis are driven to such extremes to justify their own existence as a national group is the product of extreme insecurity about their constructed identity.

One does not have to look far to find the basis for this insecurity. While the Zionists have succeeded in dividing Arabs and Jews in Palestine, such divisions can never really be permanent. The two groups of people inhabit the same land, work together (if unequally), and cannot actually exist independently of one another, at least not anymore. Furthermore, the attempts to divide them culturally are under constant attack. The Zionist state must do everything in its power to maintain the illusion of irreconcilable difference.

One example of this breakdown of difference has come about in the use of Hebrew in Israel. Until the beginning of Zionist settlement in Palestine, Hebrew was largely a liturgical language with a smaller secular cultural audience. It was not the mother tongue of any living Jewish community. The Zionist leadership established Hebrew as the mother tongue of the Jewish community in Palestine, both as a device to unify the disparate Jewish immigrants into a single national community and to prevent the cultural assimilation of the immigrants into the indigenous Arab population. The creation of Hebrew as a national language has been one of the great successes of the Zionist movement, but not without some

³¹ Roselle Tekiner, “The ‘Who is a Jew?’ Controversy in Israel: a Product of Political Zionism,” Roselle Tekiner, Samir Abed-Rabbo, and Norton Mezvinsky (eds.), *Anti-Zionism: Analytical Reflections* (Brattleboro, 1989), p. 75.

³² *Ibid*, pp. 80–1.

contradictions being raised. For one, Hebrew was insufficient on its own. Words have had to be borrowed from other languages, including Arabic. More importantly, Arab writers within Israel have begun to express themselves in Hebrew. One writer of extraordinary talent, Anton Shammas, has written what some consider to be the greatest novel yet produced in the Hebrew language.³³ While some Israeli Jewish authors have welcomed this phenomenon as proof of the success of Hebrew literature, one cannot help but wonder what this trend (if it becomes such) will mean for the future of Arab-Jewish separation in Palestine.

Of even greater significance to this question, much of what is called “Israeli” culture is clearly copied or directly expropriated from the Palestinian Arabs. Israeli restaurants serve traditional Arab food, Arab handicrafts are sold as “Israeli”; the list is enormous. While Israelis have tried to refuse to face the consequences of such borrowing by denying its Arab origins, this charade cannot go on forever.

Indeed, the Israeli public is constantly faced with cultural objects of Arab origin aimed at Oriental Jews of Arab origin. Films, concerts, and other cultural artifacts emanating from the Arab world continue to be popular with Oriental (we should properly say “Arab”) Jews. One example of this trend can be seen in popular music. One of the reigning stars of “worldbeat” is the *rai* singer Cheb Khaled. Of Algerian origin, Cheb Khaled is the best known of a group of North African singers who have popularized a culturally mixed (Arab, Berber, European) form of music that addresses the aspirations and frustrations of the youth and the oppressed. Besides his native North Africa, Cheb Khaled has attained considerable popularity in France, with its large North African immigrant population, and in Israel, where he was the first Arab singer to attain “number one” status. While much of his audience no doubt is among Oriental Jews, other Israelis could not help but be impressed by his success. What is particularly intriguing about the success now enjoyed by *rai* singers is that for the first time the whole Middle East is listening to the same music. To some degree this fact can be attributed to aggressive marketing on the part of the French, but it speaks of a greater potential for cultural mixing and the creation of common tastes.

One should not, however, blow this cultural mixing out of proportion. The barriers remain in place, and the current attempts to repartition Palestine into Arab and Jewish sectors will only increase the alienation of the two groups from one another without actually removing any of the economic or social impediments to real solidarity. Indeed, this is just what the Zionist leadership wants.

³³ The English translation was published under the title *Arabesques*.

A perfect example can be taken from the recent Knesset decision to support the negotiation of some form of withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the area around Jericho. When the Labor-led coalition was in danger of collapsing, it received the support of the few Arab legislators in the Knesset. However, Labor made it clear that no Labor-Arab coalition would be acceptable to them, and Labor leaders spoke of the need for a "Jewish majority" to make any such important decisions about the future of the country. Clearly, the granting of voting rights to Arabs living inside Israel has not changed the character of the Israeli state. Israeli Jews consider the state to be their property, and only they have the right to determine its future. The state of the Jewish people continues to be run by a caste which has no intentions of allowing full democracy for all of its residents, even within Israel's official borders.

This fact reinforces the need to construct an alternative to Zionism and Palestinian Arab nationalism. It is clear that the current plan to redivide Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab bantustan will not bring an end to the suffering of the excluded Arab population. Nor will such a solution compensate for the failures of Zionism to solve the "Jewish Question," since the creation of a Jewish caste in Palestine has only inflamed the growth of Anti-Semitism in the Middle East and led to recurrent wars and atrocities.

The failure of the current Israeli-PLO agreement could also foreshadow more ominous events. The Labor government has already sustained significant criticism from the Likud opposition which promises its supporters a big Israel. As the inability of the parties to solve the basic problems of Arab-Israeli relations becomes clear, the Likud, or those to its right, may push for sterner measures, including the removal of the Arab population. The recent political activism of Ariel Sharon, the Butcher of Lebanon, is a sign of this rightward turn. If a movement that combines the political aspirations of Arabs and Jews cannot be built, an Israeli demagogue may find a willing audience among Oriental and Russian Jews who are locked out of the Labor establishment.

At the moment, neither the Arab nor Jewish political spheres have much to offer. The Palestinian Arabs are caught between the opportunism of the PLO and the fanaticism of Hamas. While individual Israelis have made clear their opposition to the Zionist government, none has succeeded in working with like-minded Arabs to create the necessary political movement. What is needed is a movement of Arab and Hebrew workers that is dedicated not only to formal equality, but also to tearing down the borders between one another, and between Palestine and its neighbors. Such a movement would undoubtedly meet with the enmity not only of the Israeli state, but also of all of the surrounding Arab dictatorships.

However such a movement is formed, one point cannot be subject to negotiation or compromise. Any claim by the current members of the Jewish caste to nationhood, and thus to self-determination, must be rejected. Palestinians, whether they are Arabic or Hebrew speakers, are members of one, indivisible nation. All attempts to partition or repartition the country and the nation in the name of “two peoples” must be rejected as mere modifications in the terms of an apartheid system. Only the abolition of the Jewish caste can prevent the continuation of the ongoing race war in Palestine by building a society free of race and caste.

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The Intifada Continues — Against Arafat

Adam Sabra

1995

The massacre of 12 anti-Arafat demonstrators on Nov. 18 outside the Palestine mosque in Gaza is the logical result of the so-called peace process in the Middle East. While news agencies and governments either feigned surprise at the events that have unfolded in the areas controlled by the Palestine Liberation Organization, or attempted to blame the victims, anyone with a clear-sighted view of the situation in Palestine could have predicted these events, and expects the situation only to get worse.

The reality of the Oslo agreement between the PLO and Israel is imposing itself on the fantasies of “just and lasting” peace and mutual cooperation that have dominated “mainstream” political opinion for the past year. In place of high-sounding values and saccharine rhetoric, the Palestinian Authority in Gaza and Jericho is looking more and more like an instrument of fascist oppression in the hands of the Israeli government.

The Events

Since news coverage of the Middle East in the US is often spotty, not to mention hopelessly pro-Zionist, a summary of recent events is in order. The Nov. 18 massacre was the culmination of a series of events that began in October. Since that time, Islamic Resistance Movement in Palestine (Hamas) and Islamic Jihad have carried out a series of attacks against Israeli targets, both military and civilian; the attacks killed more than 30 Israelis in October alone. Since the PLO, in accordance with its agreement with Israel, is responsible for security in Gaza, the main stronghold of these groups, it has come under increasing pressure from Israel and the US to suppress “Islamic fundamentalist terrorism” in the name of protecting peace. Of course, this amounts to demanding that the PLO defend the Israeli army against Palestinian resistance.

The first major incident in this chain of events occurred with the seizure, by Hamas militants, of an Israeli soldier in mid-October. The militants demanded the release of their comrades held in Israeli jails. Initially, the Israeli authorities claimed that the soldier was being held in the area administered by the PLO, and began a campaign to disparage the PLO’s ability to maintain security. In the end, however, the soldier turned out to be held in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, and was killed, along with the militants, during a botched Israeli commando raid on Oct. 15. Four days later, a Hamas suicide bomber killed himself and 22 Israeli civilians when he blew up a bus in the heart of Tel Aviv.

Clearly, the message had been delivered. The Islamic movement would continue its attacks on Israeli targets, without regard for the PLO-Israel peace agree-

ment. Naturally, the Israelis demanded that the PLO crack down on Palestinian opponents to the peace process, which they proceeded to do, arresting dozens. As will be discussed in more detail below, these initial events were very much to Israel's advantage. Arafat and his cronies were being turned into Israel's first line of defense. Furthermore, Israel did not leave matters in the hands of the PLO. Shortly thereafter, the Israelis assassinated a journalist, Hani Abed, who was a major figure in Islamic Jihad. On Nov. 13, Jihad responded by launching a suicide attack, in the PLO-controlled zone, which killed three Israeli soldiers. This attack was a major embarrassment to Yasir Arafat, since it was carried out right under his nose. The PLO responded by arresting approximately 180 activists from the Islamic movements. A war of words ensued, and tension within the Palestinian community grew more intense.

Matters came to a head when, on Nov. 18, a joint Hamas-Islamic Jihad demonstration, following Friday prayers at the Palestine mosque in Gaza, turned into a massacre. For no explicable reason, the PLO fired thousands of rounds of live ammunition at the demonstrators. Twelve were killed and dozens injured. The PLO quickly tried to blame someone, anyone, else for the incident. First they claimed that the demonstrators had started the shooting, then they blamed foreign instigators such as Iran. When this failed, they tried other, more absurd explanations. Nabil Shaath, the main PLO negotiator with Israel, claimed that nine of those killed were members of Yasir Arafat's own organization, Fatah. Arafat himself tried to imply that the Israelis were responsible. With hundreds of witnesses to the events, however, none of this nonsense could convince anyone.

Since the massacre, the political leaderships of both the PLO and the Islamic movements have taken a step back. While the rank-and-file of Hamas and Islamic Jihad have been calling for revenge, the leadership is more timid, or perhaps believes that time is on their side. After all, with every new outrage, Arafat loses more and more credibility with his own people. In the meantime, a war of demonstrations has broken out. Arafat's storm troopers, the Fatah Hawks, staged an armed demonstration of several thousand men in support of their leader. When Hamas organized an even larger "festival" the following week, the PLO police confiscated the Palestinian and Israeli newspapers distributed in Gaza to prevent their reporting on the size of the opposition. Despite attempts at mediation on the part of several parties within Palestinian society, the situation remains critical. Any move by either party could set off a bloody conflict within the PLO-administrated areas. The current plans to hold elections in Gaza and the West Bank could provide the spark that sets off the conflagration.

Analysis

That the PLO-Israel peace agreement is in mortal danger is now obvious to everyone. The fact remains, however, that the commentators of the mainstream press are unable to comprehend the real causes behind the collapse of "peace." Most of the rhetoric emanating from the Western capitals presents the image of Islamic reactionaries trying to sink the enlightened attempts of secular powers to bring a new hope to the benighted peoples of the Middle East.

This rhetoric is based on two fundamental errors in conception. First, the problem is perceived as a struggle between national movements, which can be solved by some form of re-partition of Palestine. Second, the attempts of the US and Europeans to arrange peace agreements between the Israelis and the Arab states are presented as aimed at changing the future of the Middle East for the benefit of its peoples.

The first point requires a substantial reply. The conflict between Zionism and Palestinian nationalism is not really a conflict between two national peoples over the division of land. In fact, the conflict more closely resembles the struggle in South Africa against apartheid. The Zionist movement is a settler-colonial movement that has established a state by and for the Jewish people, an entity it created in the process of settlement, to the exclusion of the indigenous Arab Palestinian people. As such, Zionism is a form of racial segregation and oppression that cannot be alleviated by an attempt to redraw the borders of the state.

The bankruptcy of this measure becomes clear when one examines the case of the Gaza Strip. Gaza has no independent economy. More than 30,000 Gazans work inside Israel, and when the borders are closed between the two regions "for security reasons," they and their families go without income entirely. According to a recent statement by Yasir Arafat himself, the unemployment rate in Gaza is currently 52%. In these circumstances, it is clear that Gaza forms a source of cheap labor for the Israeli economy. Despite many plans to replace "dangerous" Arab labor in Israel with "safe" labor imported from Southeast Asia, Israel continues to depend on Palestinian Arab labor. Even if the Israeli economy could be gradually weaned of its dependence on Arab labor, this would only cause the complete collapse of Gazan society.

On the West Bank, the situation is much the same, although the economy is somewhat less depressed. Nonetheless, the major question there will be the division of lands. The West Bank has considerable agricultural potential, but Israel has seized most of the best land for its settlements. Despite all of the loud noises concerning peace and brotherhood, Israeli settlers continue to pour into the West Bank. It is therefore very unlikely that the Israeli government will be

willing to concede any territories to the Palestinian Arabs. Redrawing the maps will not change the basic economic realities in Palestine.

It should also be noted that “peace” has been more of a fantasy than a reality. In the first 11½ months after the Oslo accord, 119 Palestinians were killed by the Israeli Occupation Authorities (including 17 killed by undercover units). Another 45 were killed by Israeli settlers. In the same period, 29 Israelis were killed by Palestinians. The fact is that the Intifada goes on, with or without international recognition.

As for the second point, that the peace process will bring a new future to the Middle East, this is the most absurd idea of them all. Any remotely competent observer can tell that the peace process is a tool to rescue the regimes in place in the Middle East. It has become increasingly obvious that the entire Middle Eastern state system requires direct and regular American intervention to avoid being swept away. The opening act of this drama was the Gulf War, in which the US and its allies intervened to save the Gulf states, especially Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, from collapse. Currently, pro-American regimes in Algeria and Egypt are under sustained attack by Islamic militants. The future of Lebanon depends on Syrian-Israeli cooperation, and Iraq and Turkey are wracked by ongoing civil wars, especially with their Kurdish populations. The US desperately needs a settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict to keep a lid on the changes that are sweeping the region.

Perhaps the most endangered group of all is the leadership of the PLO. When the Intifada, or Uprising, began in Dec. 1987, the PLO was taken completely by surprise. The Palestinian people showed a remarkable ability to reorganize themselves spontaneously by recasting old organizational forms and creating new ones overnight. Since the Intifada began in Palestine, the methods displayed there have been studied and put into practice by opposition movements all over the Middle East, although none of them has yet to achieve the success of the original. Perhaps the most remarkable achievement of the Intifada has been its ability to perpetuate itself over seven years of constant, bloody repression. Its strength lies in the fact that it is not a small, conspiratorial party, but a true mass movement that cannot be beheaded by the death or imprisonment of a few leaders. In spite of every attempt by the Zionist government and the PLO leadership to liquidate the Intifada, the struggle continues.

It must be said, however, in criticism, that in many aspects the Intifada has yet to transcend the limitations of a national movement. The PLO and the Islamists are selling different brands of the same product: the dream of a Palestinian Arab national state. The PLO has abandoned its call for a secular, democratic state in all of Palestine in favor of accepting an Israeli-backed bantustan. The Islamists, at

least some of them, reject any compromise with Zionism, but want to substitute an Islamic state for the Jewish state. Clearly neither option holds out much hope for either Arab or Jewish Palestinians. Neither does either endeavor have much chance of succeeding.

It is important to remember here that the Zionist movement has not succeeded entirely in subjecting Jewish opinion to its aims. Large sectors of Israeli Jewish society continue to suffer class and ethnic oppression, especially Jews of Arab origin, who are largely working class, and recent Russian immigrants. Like working class whites in the US, these groups sometimes support extreme-right policies as a means of keeping the racially oppressed one level beneath them. On the other hand, they have no illusions about the dreams being sold by the Zionist leadership and its international allies. Any attempt to move beyond the current impasse must make use of their talents and address their concerns.

What is needed now is coordination between Arab and Jewish Palestinians to build a united movement against Zionism and its Arab lackeys. Such a movement cannot make any concessions to Zionism or ethnic nationalism. The basis of this movement should be the common exploitation of Arab and Jewish labor by Zionist capital. The Intifada, which was begun by Palestinian Arabs, must be extended to include disaffected elements within Israeli Jewish society. This process will not only help to strengthen the existing struggle, it will also transform that struggle into a united front against all forms of exploitation. The repartition of Palestine must be replaced by a Palestine without borders. The failure to build such a movement can only invite further tragedies on an even greater scale.

For reasons of space, the writer has refrained from giving a detailed historical summary of the Zionist movement and the development of the race war in Palestine. Those readers who would like to obtain a more detailed account of the background to the Palestinian conflict are directed to the writer's articles in *Love and Rage* (Nov. 1993) and *Race Traitor* (Fall 1994).

Kibbutz Samar

Meir Turniansky

1997

I must admit that one of the main reasons (apart from being an anarchist at heart) for which I read “Freedom” are the lively and varied reports on international affairs. Reports on the situation in remote places such as Indonesia, Ecuador and Paraguay always gave me a feeling that I am correctly informed on the social developments in these places.

Therefore as a “Freedom” reader who lives in a Kibbutz I was somewhat shocked by the poor representation of the situation in the Kibbutzim today in the article: “end of Jewish utopia” (“Freedom” 6th of September). This article quotes outdated sources from 50 years ago. While being bleak and unclear it gives facts which are either wrong or distorted. I would like to try to give more ample and correct information on the Kibbutzim then and now.

First of all the Kibbutz movement was never Jewish-Arab but based purely, like the rest of the Zionist movement, from its beginning in the turn of the century, on Jewish immigrants from east Europe who were influenced by marxist ideas. Anarchism was not really part of the game as Russia was revered as the almighty father (the main title in the kibbutzim newspaper on the day of Stalin’s death in 1953 said: “the sun of nationalities has turned off”).

The Kibbutzim adopted a strict communal lifestyle which interweaved with the then vigilant (as now in a way) situation of Jewish settlement in Israel. All private property was banned, even clothes were communal. The Kibbutz members lived in rooms which had virtually nothing in them apart from a bed. All decisions were made by the members assembly in a democratic way including the names of the first babies! Eating was (and still is) done in a dining hall with a central kitchen, laundry was also communal and so was the kindergarten. The children

did not sleep at home with their parents but in a dormitory in the kindergarten/school with one parent in shift guarding them. The idea in these central/com-munal facilities was also to liberate women from the endless toil of the house-work by shifting it to central facilities thus also making it more efficient. After all there is hardly any doubt that it is more efficient and economical to cook for a few hundred people in one central kitchen or laundry than each family for itself. The members were requested to work a similar amount of hours a day and re-ceived their consumption needs according to a general budget or allocation de-cided concerning health, housing etc. All the profits and the assets belong to the community which decided how to use it, there were no private bank accounts. All budgets were similar thus creating a society where people were (materially) equal.

From the period of the beginning of the century until the 1980's about 300 different Kibbutzim were built. They were hailed as containing the *crème de la crème* of Israeli society (the state was established in 1948), many artists but also leaders, and generals of Israel came from the Kibbutzim even though they con-tained only 3% of the population in Israel. Indeed many saw the kibbutz as a utopia at that time, and it became the most sociologically researched society in the world. The nature of the society was absolutely secular excluding a few reli-gious kibbutzim. Unfortunately apart from one attempt there was never any real effort to merge with the arab population in Israel. The kibbutzim took what is revered to as a "mild left wing stance", while advocating peace and co-existence with the Arabs within and without Israel, they remained strictly arrogantly Zion-ist, therefore never willing to compromise on the Jewish only character of Israel.

The article claims "that the last of the kibbutz has given up". This is again only partially true (as is the picture drawn by the too short article in the "Raven" on new life to the land), the thing which has been given up by the last kibbutz is the communal dormitory of the children and not the whole ideology which contains much more than that. It is true that the kibbutzim are changing. Israel has grown and became a much richer capitalistic Americanized and less ideological coun-try. The kibbutzim whose fate was bound with Israeli society begun to change also. At first a private kettle was allowed in the rooms then furniture then books kitchens and all the other wonders of private property. Today a house of a family in a kibbutz looks just like a typical house in the city. The dining hall still exists but members can choose if they wish to cook at home or eat in it. All property is allowed and is bought according to a members budget where he can even cre-ate his own credit account. The communal lodging of the children has been re-nounced and the children sleep at home. Many central facilities still exist: the launderette, the central office which manages the managing, accountancy and

governmental paperwork for all. Many Kibbutzim are taking steps towards becoming a capitalist society, meaning:

1. private accounts for members which will account to every expense of the member including those which previously were not accounted for such as meals, electricity etc.
2. The gradual leasing of the kibbutz assets to the members until their final purchasing by the members.
3. Nomination of boards of directories to manage the kibbutz.
4. Differentiation of budgets between the different members according to the responsibility of their work meaning: salaries.

Indeed here the article is right, many Kibbutzim are not a utopistic society anymore but a society in transit towards a rural town on the scale of a small village. Still the Kibbutzim were never “pioneers of anarchism” except a few rare examples which I feel one of them is the kibbutz I live in which like some others still maintains it’s revolutionary way of life but in a different way than the original kibbutz.

The kibbutz in which I live (it is called Samar) has an ideology of non intervention with the members life which remarkably reminds anarchist theories. The main points of social “order” here are:

1. Everybody decides for himself where and how much he works.
2. There is no budget, everyone draws cash as he wishes.
3. decisions are reached only by dialogue or the assembly.
4. There are hardly any committees to monitor internal affairs as in other Kibbutzim.
5. All facilities e.g. kitchen, office etc. are open all the times — there are no locks anywhere.

These features or customs of our life style are possible because here lives a small group of people which decided it wants to live this way. Of course this requires much self control from the member since this whole system is based on the fact that people will consider the communal property, money and works to

be done as their own and therefore will work well and spend the money sparingly, but all is done according to their decision. The belief is that this freedom will lead to better results than the usual systems of control and coercion societies usually use. Up to today things are working fine, this place is prospering and has a strong social spine. There are about 150 residents living here including 80 members. We grow dates and vegetables and have a dairy farm and some tiny factories. Maybe the most interesting thing regarding “Freedom” readers about this place is the fact that you will not find here more than five people who know who Kropotkin was. The word “anarchy” is hardly ever mentioned, and is sometimes even abused in its negative misleading conception (equal to just one big mess where nobody cares about anything). This place emerged as an anarchistic society without people planning it ideologically. The healthy society here is more a result of people from well-to-do houses being fed up of the rotten systems they grew up in (many of them were raised in old and stagnated kibbutzim) having an opportunity to act freely and manage their own lives from A to Z as a small desolate rural place like Samar makes possible.

I feel that in Samar it is proven that true anarchy can exist and benefit the people who practice it. People here are always willing to defend the way of life we live even if it means restraining themselves since eventually they do prosper and enjoy a good deal of freedom. Readers who would like to contact us to learn more about Samar or to come and volunteer here are invited to write to:

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Israel: 50 Years of Conquest

Various Authors

1999

FE Note: We are publishing this essay to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel. It is a substantially revised version of two articles written in the wake of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 (“The Israeli Massacre — Peace in Galilee?” and “Latin American Terror: The Israeli Connection”) that appeared in the Fall 1982 *Fifth Estate* (now out of print). Both were written by David Watson for the special edition which included Fredy Perlman’s “Anti-Semitism and the Beirut Pogrom.”

* * *

When the founder of organized zionism, Theodor Herzl, proposed to create a European Jewish state in the Middle East as “an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism,” he was acting within a long tradition rooted in the rise of the ancient slave-state empires.

This imperial program became predominant with the rise of capitalism and its expansion first into the heaths of Europe (home of the “heathen” to be conquered, christianized and civilized by the developing state powers across the continent) and later to the other inhabited continents of the world where these civilized men — explorers, missionaries, marauders, and colonizers — spread their empire.

The enterprise which all of these pyramid-builders undertook was and is nothing less than a war upon the wilderness of the other: the subjugation of nature and of “savage” peoples, the ordering and quantification of the universe, the victory of production over idleness, the construction of the Perfect State. The attitude of empire builders is always the same, no matter where they find themselves, in the lushest forest or the most arid desert. It is all “wasteland” to be subdued, dominated, transformed into energy and commodities.

Once embarked upon the imperial project, the Jewish colonists in Palestine — many themselves once members of a little tribe slated for extermination by capitalism’s robot mass-men — embraced all of its attributes. For the zionist settlers, “land without people for a people without land” — was a wasteland and wilderness to be conquered, and the inhabitants would have to submit, go elsewhere, or be annihilated. Their dream of manifest destiny required it, just as the imperial dreams of the Spanish conquistadors, English Puritans, and the Afrikaners has earlier required it.

In his revealing introduction to Yaakov Morris’ book *Masters of the Desert* (1961), Israeli founder and the country’s first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, sums up this spirit of conquest in his discussion of the Negev Desert. “The reclamation of the Negev Desert,” he writes, “has more than local interest, vital as

that interest may be to the State of Israel itself. Here, man is faced with a fateful and momentous challenge of nature. To conquer the wastelands, all his will and devotion, labor and energy, time-tested as well as newly invented techniques of science, will have to be employed ... The Negev, in short, is in many respects a small and modest pilot plant in mankind's over-all battle against the desert regions anywhere."

Not only does Ben-Gurion repeat the rhetoric of the early settlers of the North American continent, he repeats the formula for his success by drawing a portrait of capital itself: "The contemporary civilization advancing into the Negev embodies many of the characteristics of those which have appeared in the past. It is based as they were upon a combination of agriculture, industry, mining and international trade, the settlement of large units of population, the combination of settlement and defense. The heritage of the past is here being enriched with the conquests of modern science and technology." The project of Israeli capitalist development — successful settlement and economic expansion — cannot be achieved, of course, "without the transformation of the facts of nature," he adds. "Science and pioneering will enable us to perform this miracle."

All of the elements are present: science and technology, industrialism and trade, urbanism, defense — all summed up in one word: pioneering. Of course the battle of the pioneer against the wilderness is also a struggle against the human fauna which is inevitably present in it. Here too, the Israeli model follows the general rule, be it in the development of the Negev for economic and military purposes (and a veritable war against the Bedouin tribespeople who have resided there for millennia), or in the conquest of significantly more settled areas, such as the towns, farms and orchards stolen wholesale by the Israeli colonial-settler state. As Ben-Gurion insists, "To maintain the status quo will not do. We have set up a dynamic state bent on expansion." (see below)

"An outpost of civilization"

Contrary to liberal pro-zionist mystifications that it is only this season's wave of brutality against the indigenous population that squander Israel's "moral capital," the drama of fascist settlers in the West Bank and what is more or less the ethnic cleansing of Arab Jerusalem is no aberration. Israel was established from the beginning on a racist, nationalist ideology of Jewish "manifest destiny." In this regard, Zionism is an integral part of the nineteenth century development of reactionary nationalist movements — and its revenge. The Jews, stateless, landless victims of every European nationalism, were themselves eventually un-

leashed on others as an advance guard of imperialism in the Middle East. As the Situationist International commented in 1967:

Since its origins the Zionist movement has been contrary to the revolutionary solution to what used to be called the Jewish Question. A direct product of European capitalism, it did not aim at the overthrow of a society that needed to persecute Jews, but at the creation of a Jewish national entity that would be protected from the anti-semitic aberrations of decadent capitalism; it aimed not at the abolition of injustice, but at its transfer ... The success of Zionism and its corollary, the creation of the state of Israel, is merely a miserable by-product of the triumph of world counter-revolution. To 'socialism in a single country' came the echo 'justice for a single people' and 'equality in a single kibbutz.'

It was with Rothschild capital that the colonization of Palestine was organized and with European surplus-value that the first kibbutzim were set up. The Jews recreated for themselves all the fanaticism and segregation of which they had been victims. Those who had suffered mere toleration in their society were to struggle to become in another country owners disposing of the right to tolerate others. The prolonged sleep of proletarian internationalism once more brought forth a monster. The basic injustice against the Palestinian Arabs came back to roost with the Jews themselves: the State of the Chosen People was nothing but one more class society in which all the anomalies of the old societies were recreated... ("Two Local Wars," October 1967, in *The Situationist International Anthology*)

The career of Theodor Herzl shows clearly the bourgeois nationalist and colonialist nature of Zionism. Herzl spent his life petitioning the various heads of Europe, including Bismarck, British imperialist architect Cecil Rhodes, the Czar of Russia and his pogromist minister Von Plehve, the Pope and the Turkish Sultan for funds and support to create a Jewish settler state in Palestine. Such a project would serve two fundamental purposes: it would siphon off the revolutionary Jewish masses and create a European outpost in the Middle East, where the Zionist state would "form a portion of the rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism," as Herzl put it in his 1896 book, *A Jewish State*

This imperialist bulwark took the same form in Palestine in relation to the original inhabitants that such projects did everywhere (e.g. South Africa, Rhodesia

and the Americas), confirming radical anthropologist Stanley Diamond's famous definition of civilization as *conquest abroad and repression at home*. And the colonization process was the same. Ahad Ha'am, a famous Jewish writer, noted in 1891 on a visit to Palestine, that the Jewish settlers there "treat Arabs with hostility, deprive them of their rights, offend them without cause and even boast of these deeds; and nobody among us opposes this despicable inclination."

Origins of the zionist state

In 1907, the Hebrew journal *Ha Shiloah* observed, "Unless we want to deceive ourselves deliberately, we have to admit that we have thrown people out of their miserable lodgings and taken away their sustenance." The German socialist politician Karl Kautsky noted in 1921, "Little more attention was paid to the Arabs than was paid to the Indians in North America." Employing land purchases from absentee landlords, the Jewish settlers forced small farmers and sharecroppers off land they had inhabited for generations.

At the end of World War I, Palestine was nearly 95 percent Palestinian-Arab, but by 1929, money from Europe, support from Great Britain, and land purchases and provocations had already driven almost 2,000 Palestinian families from their land. By 1940, Yoseph Weitz, head of the Jewish Agency Settlement Department, commented, "Between ourselves, it must be clear that there is no room in this country for both peoples ... the only solution is Eretz Israel [Greater Israel], at least the Western Israel [west of the Jordan River], without Arabs, and there is no other way but to transfer them all — not one village, not one tribe should be left." (cited by Noam Chomsky in his book, *Peace in the Middle East*). During the 1948 War, three-quarters of a million people were driven from their homes by armed zionist settlers; the newly formed state quickly employed its Absentee Property Law to dispossess thousands of their land, their shops, and their orchards. Of the approximately four hundred Jewish settlements established after 1948, some 350 were on Palestinian refugee property. Two-thirds of cultivated land was originally Palestinian-owned. As Don Peretz noted in the September 1969 issue of the Israeli magazine *New Outlook*, as a result of the 1948 War:

Whole Arab cities — such as Jaffa, Acre, Lydda, Ramle, Baysan, and Maida — 338 towns and villages, and large parts of others, containing nearly a quarter of all buildings standing in Israel during 1948, were taken over by new Jewish immigrants. Ten thousand former Arab shops, businesses and stores were left in Jewish hands as well

as some 30,000 acres of groves that supplied at least a quarter of the new state's scarce foreign currency earnings from citrus. Acquisition of this former Palestinian Arab property helped greatly to make the Jewish state economically viable and to speed up the early influx of refugees and immigrants from Europe.

Israeli military leader Moshe Dayan observed afterward, in 1969, "There is not a single Jewish settlement that was not established in the place of a former Arab village." By 1958, a quarter of a million acres of land had been expropriated from Palestinians who had remained in Israel. This same genocidal, culturcidal policy remains in operation today.

Zionist propaganda, on the other hand, has always portrayed Palestine as an uninhabited desert before the arrival of the Jews, a racist-nationalist mystique typified, for example, by the notorious declaration made by the American-born Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, who declared, "It is not as though there was a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them. They did not exist." In reality the Zionist invaders "made the desert bloom" by stealing the villages, orchards, gardens and pastures from their original owners — a desert that had been in bloom for centuries. The well-known, often-repeated tale among Palestinians of a grandparent, or uncle or aunt, who went into exile carrying a few seeds from the family garden, is testimony to the world and the dreams the people driven from their homes left behind.

A Palestinian state?

Zionist ideology exploited the legitimate desires of the Jewish people to escape the cauldron of violence and extermination in Europe that brought about the annihilation of millions of their brethren. The ghastly irony of the search for security in the creation of a national state on plundered lands was that such a situation was bound to create greater and greater dangers and insecurities with higher stakes at every turn. Not only did Zionism become the blighted mirror image of all the oppressive national state ideologies which immiserated and murdered the Jews, it set the stage for never-ending insecurity within a garrison state constantly threatened by surrounding hostile nation-state which saw it as an incursion into their own national or Pan-Arab designs.

Zionism also generated another wave of victims, its *own* demonized outsiders, who will continue to challenge the legitimacy of Israeli manifest destiny as long as they exist as a people, however dispersed and despised they may be. The

efforts of these new victims of diaspora to return to and regain their ancestral lands have at times been peaceful, at times violent, sometimes reasonable and other times murderous. The colonial hubris of the Israeli state and betrayals by the neighboring reactionary Arab regimes gave birth to a Palestinian nationalist movement which became the mirror image of zionism, similar in its nationalist ideology, its dependence on various nation-states for support, and its methods of military struggle and terrorism. Eventually, two national movements came to face each other, arms in hand: one powerful, with an army and police and nuclear arsenal, and the backing of the world's most powerful imperialist nation; the other outgunned, betrayed by all its backers, marginalized and desperate.

Of course, media images and zionist propaganda notwithstanding, Palestinians have overall been far more the *victims* of terror and violence than the perpetrators in this feud. To give a couple of examples, when Palestinian Black September commandos took Israeli athletes hostage in Munich during the 1972 Olympics, a shoot-out ensued with West German police in which the Palestinians and eleven Israelis were killed. The Israeli state immediately carried out reprisal air raids against Palestinian refugee camps in southern Lebanon which killed three hundred people. While 192 Israelis were killed during the Palestinian Intifada on the West Bank, more than 1300 Palestinians were killed by Israeli soldiers and settlers.

As PLO columns were being evacuated from Beirut after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and terror bombing of its capital in 1982, Israeli Prime Minister Menachim Begin declared to a group of Lebanon and terror bombing of its capital in 1982, Israeli Prime Minister Menachim Begin declared to a group of American Jews in Jerusalem, "Very soon the fighting will be finished, and then perhaps that famous verse from the Book of Judges will be brought into realization: 'There shall be peace in the land for forty years.'" But neither the Israeli military "final solution" of the Palestinian problem in Beirut nor the peace treaty with Arafat more than a decade later have resolved the fundamental conflict. During the 1980s the Palestinian popular resistance that became the Intifada, much of it outside official PLO control, forced the Israeli state to the bargaining table as no terrorism or guerilla warfare had. But a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza under the present configuration of power can be little more than an exploited, repressive, militarily regulated reservation for cheap labor under the domination of Israel and perhaps Jordan. Indeed, since the signing of the sham peace, the Israeli state has failed even to comply with a minimum of its agreements, and has used the accords with the PLO to continue its consolidation of "Eretz Israel," while the PLO proto-state fiasco has rapidly been reduced to the status of a corrupt ghetto administration subservient to its Israeli oppressors and

squeezed from the other extreme by an increasingly furious Palestinian population.

Some wit recently remarked that the Israeli-Palestinian debacle has become the longest lasting crisis in modern history, but it's a crisis unlikely to go on forever. In 1970, Nathan Yalin-Mor, a member of the Zionist terrorist Stern Gang in the 1940s who later became an advocate of Arab-Jewish reconciliation, observed, "A new selling out of the Palestinian people would amount to planting a time bomb to explode after a few years." While Israel maintains military superiority and the support of the U.S. military machine, Chomsky's warning in 1976 in *Peace in the Middle East?* remains valid: "In general, each military success simply reconstitutes the struggle at a higher level of military force ... a higher level of potential danger to all concerned. From the Israeli point of view, this is a losing strategy. Israel can win every conflict but the last." The last, unfortunately, is likely to be a social and ecological catastrophe for the region perhaps for the whole planet. Israeli writer Uri Avneri's warnings made thirty years ago in his book *Israel Without Zionists* (1968) come to mind in the midst of the Iraqi standoff, Iran's efforts to modernize and nuclearize, and Israel's shadowy nuclear security state: "Nuclear weapons, missiles of all types, are nearing the Semitic scene," Avneri wrote; "...if the vicious circle is not broken, and broken soon, it will lead, with the preordained certainty of a Greek tragedy, toward a holocaust that will bury Tel Aviv and Cairo, Damascus and Jerusalem."

Breaking the circle

An increasingly lunatic Israeli nationalism has finally become a grotesque reflection of the anti-semitic fascists who set out to annihilate Jewry earlier in this century. If humane elements desirous of peace and reconciliation remain in Israeli society (some of them courageous activists for peace who have faced murder and violence for their work), the Israeli right is little different from the fascist Serbs lately slaughtering Kosovans in their crusade to preserve their own mythic locus of national origin. Some fundamentalist Israeli rabbis openly argue that driving out and exterminating non-Jews, including women and children, is sanctioned in Jewish scripture. "Death to the Arabs" is a common chant at the rallies of the Israeli far right, and fascist settlers have made a shrine of the grave of mass murderer Baruch Goldstein, an American rabbi who slaughtered more than fifty Arabs as they prayed in a mosque in Hebron in 1994.

While an exterminist mentality is common on the right the mainstream is little better. Israeli courts recently approved the holding of hostages randomly

taken by the Israeli military in Lebanon to be traded later, and the Likud cabinet refused to pursue an investigation of widely acknowledged Israeli military massacres of unarmed prisoners during the 1956 and 1967 wars. Israeli General Eitan, who was implicated in the 1956 massacre of Egyptian prisoners, and who now is a leader of a right wing party, has likened Palestinians on the West Bank to “cockroaches in a bottle,” and Menachim Begin called Palestinian fighters “beasts walking on two paws.” Such remarks prompted Israeli peace activist Gideon Spiro, who refused to serve in the reserves in Lebanon and the West Bank, to warn against the process of dehumanization and fascisization” of Israeli values. The Muslim fundamentalist suicide bombers are a distorted mirror image of their Zionist oppressors (and in fact serve the interests of the intransigent Zionists who look for every excuse to sabotage any kind of peace with justice for the Palestinian people).

From a radical perspective, however unrealistic, none of the basic realities has changed since *The Bulletin for Jewish-Arab Cooperation* (cited by Chomsky) pointed out in 1948 that “... the only alternative to a war between nations is not a static peace ... but a war between classes between ruled and ruler, of the Jewish and Arab workers and peasants against the two upper classes, against the fascist parties of both nations, and the British or other outside interests that want to control the area.” What might have been possible in 1948, or in 1967, or in 1982, when the Israeli invasion of Lebanon was protested by a significant section of the Israeli population and the country was divided over the issue of making peace with Palestinians, seems even more remote today, as the West Bank settlement crisis deepens and the Israeli bulldozers continue their work in Arab East Jerusalem, and nationalist maniacs continue their hideous projects of mutual annihilation.

The history of Jewish presence in Palestine is undeniable; no one who loves human freedom could ever deny their right to travel and to settle there out of a centuries-long yearning to return to the sacred places of their ancestry memory and their traditions. But the desire to return to one’s ancestral homeland is not the same as the desire to construct a national state upon lands wrested from another people. Only in a world with open frontiers and the abolition of the nation-state and its border police, a world of free passage without necessity of passports and papers, can national conflict be resolved and a fabric of cooperative human communities be established, and fratricidal conflict prevented. Thus, peace will come not with the (inevitably temporary) triumph of the various regional enemies or with the construction of separate rival states, but through the destruction of *all* national states and the mutual recognition by Israeli Jew and

Palestinian Arab, and of all the peoples of the Middle East, of the humanity and the legitimate aspirations of the other.

In Palestine-Israel, this means as fundamental precondition the abolition of Israel's repellent institution of ethnically-based citizenship, as well as respect for the inalienable prerogative of Palestinians, not just Jews, to return to their ancestral homeland. The Palestinians are, after all, descendants of the original pagan tribes of the region before the biblical exodus from Egypt, and, as Arabs, have dwelt there for more than thirteen centuries. Their rights to the places now claimed by Jews as promised by ancient tradition not only date from ancient history but from living memory.

There is also the distinctly forbidding question of the lands stolen at least since 1948 — a question not resolved in monetary, but in human, personal and communitarian terms. A section of the Jewish labor movement in Palestine understood this in its 1924 declaration (cited by Chomsky), "The main and most reliable means of strengthening peace and mutual understanding between the Jewish people and the Arab people ... is the accord, alliance, and joint effort of Jewish and Arab workers in town and country."

Such a perspective of reconciliation based on justice seems manifestly impossible today — so much blood has been shed, so many crimes committed, so many lasting hatred sown. And the situation holds little promise for a humane solution to the conflict in the foreseeable future.

Thugs Who Currently Rule

The thugs who presently rule in Jerusalem enjoy widespread support for their unyielding, arrogant campaigns, and are being attacked for their narrow right by those who would push them further into genocide. The Palestinians, on the other hand, are more destitute and desperate than ever, and increasingly captive to the most authoritarian, fundamentalist and militarist tendencies in Palestinian society, tendencies aligned with some of the most brutal and despicable political currents and regimes in the world today.

Yet, however impossible it may seem, only a radical break can transform unending national conflicts into class war against the capitalist nation states; otherwise the situation will only worsen until all contending parties succumb to their mutual destruction. The road ahead is unclear, but protagonists and victims must find a way to move beyond the fatal cycle of conquest and war. To do any less will be to accept the inevitability of the most dire and tragic consequences.

In his essay on the Negev, Ben-Gurion declared, “If the State does not put an end to the desert, the desert is liable to put an end to the State.” But the State devours itself, and ultimately life along with it. Its desperation portends its approaching collapse. The desert they are making in the name of their peace cries out in agony. Can a different vision, and real peace, emerge?

Palestinian Refugees: Ghosts of Israeli Conquest by *Ali Moosaavi*

Of all the issues raised by Israel’s fifty year anniversary, none holds more pain and longing, nor embodies the Palestinian experience more, than that of the refugees.

Numbering approximately 3.3 million, the Palestinians are the largest such group in the world and have suffered that status longer than any other. Besides being scattered in a diaspora in places as far-flung as Sweden and metropolitan Detroit, many continue to reside in refugee camps close to the land they were forced from a generation ago.

In southern Lebanon, Gaza, the West Bank as well as Libya, Jordan, Syria and Kuwait, they occupy a gulag of refugee camps marked by squalor and hopelessness. When the state of Israel was founded, the problem was viewed as so desperate that the UN established the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in the early 1950s as the main benefactor for Palestinians, providing social services and employment. However, this placed them outside the mandate of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and more specifically the 1949 General Assembly Resolution 194, with its call for either Palestinian repatriation or compensation for their losses.

Israel’s refusal to abide by the resolution leaves Palestinians stranded in host countries where they are often perceived as alien and unwanted elements, designated as social and economics prey in the service of molding national identities.

An acute example of this process involves the 400,000-plus refugees in Lebanon who face a seemingly impossible living situation of high unemployment and diminishing social services, with no hope of return to their homeland. Lebanon refuses to participate in multilateral talks on refugees while pressuring the Palestinians to leave by making their lives unbearable — a policy referred to by the refugees as strangulation.

The refugees in Lebanon are those displaced during the 1948 war, which established Israel as an exclusive Jewish state, as well as their descendants.

They lived relatively quietly until 1969 when Israeli attacks on southern Lebanon forced the Lebanese government to accept an armed Palestinian presence. A newly established Palestinian resistance movement assumed daily management of the camps, providing security, jobs, education, etc. Thus autonomous take-over of the camps was short-lived, however, when repeated assaults on refugees involved the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in Lebanon's internal strife during its ruinous civil war which began in 1975.

As the violence escalated, Israeli-backed Lebanese Phalangist militias began attacks on refugees that resulted in numerous massacres. Syria's invasion of Lebanon in the 1970s, and its support of Christian forces, resulted in thousands of refugees being massacred such as at the Tel al-Zaater camp that was overrun in August 1976. Palestinian autonomy came definitively to an end with the Israeli 1982 invasion of Lebanon.

When the PLO left a destroyed Beirut in the summer of 1982, the refugees were reconfined in camps and subjected to repeated attacks from militia forces ranging from the Syrian-backed Amal militia to the right-wing Christian Phalangists. Three months after the assassination of Lebanese prime minister, Phalangist Bashir Gemayel, Israeli-transported and armed Lebanese militia units entered the Palestinian Sabra and Shatila camps and carried out one of the worst massacres in recent history, leaving over 2,000 Palestinians dead in 38 hours.

This military assault on an increasingly defenseless population was followed by a legal one; in December 1982, the Lebanese government issued laws restricting Palestinian employment opportunities by categorizing them as foreigners. A decree by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs excluded 73 categories of employment for foreigners from banking to cutting hair. Another detailed the jobs open to those with work permits — as workers in car washes, construction and excavation, agriculture, textiles, and the leather industry, and as servants, etc. In other words, Palestinians were allowed to be exploited in menial jobs.

The camps, which once were permitted autonomous and semi-autonomous status by the Lebanese state because of its own internal weaknesses and as a buffer against Israeli attack, were transformed into virtual concentration camps. Current tight control and surveillance is an interim process determines their fate. Meanwhile, military encirclement of the camps creates and sustains an atmosphere of intimidation where refugees are fearful to leave because of the likelihood of harassment and physical attack. Since the Lebanese state sees the refugees as a potential force for revolution or as a strong and sustainable movement of resistance against their treatment as an exploitable underclass, the ability of refugees organizing politically and culturally has been strongly curtailed.

Lebanese policy toward the Palestinians is rooted in the refugee concept itself. Refugee camps are designed to manage uprooted people into a process of re-nationalization to another nation-state. This means that along with de-linking the refugee situation from its root causes, such host countries and to the refugees themselves rather than holding the original country accountable. This not only places a greater burden on both parties, it sets refugees up as a target for xenophobic hostility directed at them in host countries.

Another confining measure has been the restriction of travel imposed on Palestinian refugees. In 1995, as a protest against the peace process, Libya expelled 1,000 Palestinians to Egypt and stopped renewing work permits for thousands more. About 4,000 with Laissez-Passers (Lebanese passports) tried to return to Lebanon. At the same time, Lebanon's interior ministry issued a decree requiring those with Laissez-passers also to have entry and exit visas. Since most Palestinians did not have them, the function of the decree was to prevent Palestinian re-entry.

Economic conditions have also steadily worsened. According to a recent study of 1,500 women both in and out of camps in Lebanon, 94 percent of the respondents' households had a monthly income less than the sum that UNRWA considers the basic minimum for a family of five. On top of Lebanese apartheid, UNRWA's own system further maintains Palestinian marginalization by creating categories such as "registered," "nonregistered" and "displaced persons" in order to minimize refugee numbers. The agency's accountability to the UN Secretary-General and to UN major donor nations, rather than to the people it allegedly serves, not only leads it to ignore human rights abuses, but to suppress refugee voices.

The biggest gap in UNRWA's ability to provide services has been chronic deficits despite a budget increase of 70 percent from \$32 million in 1993 to \$55 million in 1997. UNRWA began imposing austerity measures, including tuition fees in UNRWA schools that led to a 1997 nine-day hunger strike. Relief came following an emergency appeal to donor countries which covered the deficit, but refugees still walk a precarious line.

Palestinians are frequently forced to move from one camp to another in order to escape violence or because of transfer programs designed to fragment the community and to control this potentially revolutionary bloc. Self-identity is therefore determined by power relations at specific points in time. In the pre-1968 era, Palestinians rejected the term "refugee" as insulting and demeaning, preferring the label of "returner." According to this idea the word "refugee" defines the problem as purely humanitarian, rather than acknowledging a distinct

national identity and history that allow Palestinians to reclaim their homes and their hopes.

Following the 1960s emergence of the Palestinian resistance movement, refugees in Lebanon refashioned themselves from passive spectators to active resisters. But in post-1982 Lebanon, Palestinians became refugees once again, not by choice, but out of necessity. This gave them access to badly needed UN-RWA services, but meant relinquishing their dream of returning to their homes. The new status also required subjecting themselves to their host government with the desperate hope of gaining rights and recognition in a foreign land.

This isn't likely, given that the Lebanese state has emerged stronger and more solidified recently, with a renewed sense of national identity which does not include Palestinians. The "refugee" label is a method of exclusion enabling the Lebanese ruling class to control and exploit Palestinians. A renewed Lebanese national identity comes with the predictable chauvinism with which nationalism is built.

Nationalism requires an enemy whose presence leads to the creation or strengthening of state mechanisms that can remove and contain the object of national scorn. In Lebanon, the rise of a renewed national identity dangerously parallels that currently found in fascist and xenophobic movements in Europe and North America. It is ironic that the Palestinians, originally expelled by Zionist colonialism for the same reasons, find their descendants receiving similar treatment from other Arabs.

The possibility of expulsion continues to loom for refugees in Lebanon at two remaining Palestinian camps outside Beirut — Shatila and Bourj al Barajneh — located on land near the international airport. The camps are slated to be razed to make way for shopping malls and the expansion of a sports arena. Also, anti-refugee sentiment continues to be expressed by government officials such as in a recent statement by Lebanese Interior Minister Michel Murr on a 1997 trip to France. He said the refugees are a security threat comparable to the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon.

Palestinians want to leave, but voluntarily and to their historic homes. Israel, of course, vehemently opposes this since it would both require the return of stolen Palestinian property and challenge the Israeli state's exclusive Jewish identity. In the meantime, Palestinians in Lebanon want civil rights — the right to work, to open cultural organizations, etc., but reject naturalization, which would be a negation of their right to return. Many don't identify with Yassar Arafat's Palestinian Authority and reject resettlement in the West Bank because it's not their land. They understandably demand a return to their specific villages of origin, many of which are in Israel. This orientation toward the tradition and

place of the village functionally negates any larger nationalism or nationalist solution.

In the face of continual reversals for the Palestinians, a recent breakthrough has been the emergence of self-representation by the refugees themselves. In spite of the physical depredations, the camps can be sites for exciting and long-range struggle, which has also marked the Palestinian refugee experience. Previously, being the objects of scholarly study, refugees occupied a vacuum that didn't regard them as agents of history or producers of culture. Edward Said mentions the 1955 book, *Social Forces in the Middle East* by Sydney Fisher, as an example which only mentions refugees "as a minor irritant to progress ... or as statistics on the United Nations agenda for refugees in general."

Even the defenders of the refugees are marginalized. At the 1994 Oxford Conference on Palestinians in Lebanon, Palestinian presenters on camp conditions were crammed into a single panel with less time to speak than international and Lebanese speakers. However, despite past and continued marginalization of refugee voices under the weight of the scholarly work about them, self-representation is finally emerging in film, plays, poetry and essays. Refugee voices are emerging and expressing their viewpoints unhindered, like that of the study of refugee attitudes to the peace process released by the Campaign for Refugee Rights to Return.

Hopefully, it won't take another fifty years to see the emergence of a determined Palestinian identity free of politically nationalist trappings, even in the face of increasing repression from host countries as well as further Israeli aggression. Already the victims of ethnic cleansing, refugees will likely be targets for further land dispossession and expulsion. Their only defense that won't don't lead down the dead end road of nationalism is a revolutionary movement of the camps, firmly grounded in anti-authoritarian principles. The potential lies in their identification with their villages of origin as opposed to a modern nation state.

But that could easily change, given the history of other movements, such as Zionism, which faced similar conditions and wound up operating on authoritarian models mirroring their oppressors. If so, the Palestinians will continue to suffer the degradations of the state and capital, a common thread to which all nations are bound. Whatever the future, the fact remains that the refugee existence is the product of racism and colonialism, and further evidence of the failure of nationalism and the nation state.

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Decolonizing Jewishness

On Jewish Liberation in the 21st Century

Benjamin Steinhardt Case

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“If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

–Aboriginal activist saying, attributed to Lilla Watson

Seven decades on, Israel is geopolitically embattled and the Jewish community is increasingly polarized around the issue of occupation. The occupation – Israeli military control over the Palestinian West Bank and the borders of Gaza Strip – is five decades old. Entire generations of people have grown up without political or civil rights, under the military jurisdiction of a “democratic” state. Some trace the problem to the very existence of the State of Israel. How did the Jewish struggle to free ourselves from antisemitism lead to this point?

Following the trauma of centuries of persecution culminating in the Shoah (Holocaust), many Jews looked to the Political Zionist goal of founding a Jewish State of Israel, in what was then British Palestine, as a guiding star in a time of profound darkness. Defending their new state against Arab Palestinians and neighboring countries in the 1948 “War of Independence,” what Palestinians refer to as the Nakba (Catastrophe), gave the new Israelis a powerful founding myth after millennia of diasporic marginalization. To many Zionists, the State of Israel represented a historic milestone in the effort to combat antisemitism, having carved out territory to defend the Jewish people from a world that had rejected and nearly annihilated them. For many Palestinians and others, Zionism itself represents a new front in the historic expansion of European colonialism, with the 1967 occupation, or the State of Israel itself, representing a crime against humanity. Israel, the Jewish Question, and the occupation continue to play a central role in global political discussions to a degree that is vastly disproportionate to the amount of people directly affected by them, placing these issues, as Hannah Arendt once put it, at the “storm center” of national and geopolitical contention.

Meanwhile, amid the impending rise of fascism with the election of Donald Trump in the US and popular surges of far right parties in Europe and elsewhere, antisemitism has reemerged as a legitimate, if uncomfortable, issue for social movements. This subject has led to renewed discussions and arguments on the Left over the scope, nature, and reality of antisemitism, as well as the role Jews play in the dominant identity politics framework of movement communities.

According to anti-colonial thinker Frantz Fanon, there are two main characters in the process of global imperialism: colonizer and colonized. Many around the world have resonated with Fanon’s analysis of colonial power dynamics and have drawn from his framework to pursue decolonization, or the process of de-

stroying colonial power structures and remaking oneself in a liberated image. Considering the occupation as it stands, it is not difficult to view the current state of the region through an anti-colonial lens with Israeli Jews playing the part of the (settler) colonizers and Palestinians playing the part of the colonized (e.g., Pappé 2015, Said 1979). In this framework, Jewish activists who oppose the Occupation play the part of “ally,” or conscientiously subordinate supporter, to Palestinian activists (and others) who are fighting for their liberation.

However, the Zionist project itself can also be understood as an attempt at Jewish decolonization. Viewing Zionism and its subjects through this lens can potentially clarify a great deal about contemporary Jewish identities, and perhaps open a new path forward in one of the defining conflicts of our time. Ultimately, this approach helps us to understand, as I argue, that the Zionist project creates a social condition in which the liberation of the Jewish people has become fundamentally intertwined with the liberation of the Palestinian people.

The Complex Jewish Position

To Fanon, there is the colonizer and there is the colonized; there is white and Black. While he explores some complexity in the psychology and social positions of the two, to Fanon the colonizer (white) and the colonized (Black) remain the primary categories of analysis. The forms of racism that are attached to this colonialism place the target group at the bottom of a racial hierarchy for the purposes of the social, political, economic, and interpersonal power of those at the top. Considering the influence of Fanon on Black Liberation and other antiracist thinkers in the US, it is no coincidence that the contemporary framework for understanding race and privilege in this country follows the same logic. In the “identity politics” paradigm of today’s social movements, the characters in the dichotomous picture are white people and “people of color” (POC). This picture can leave out a great deal of nuance, but nevertheless it captures a wide view of the politicized racial hierarchy. Importantly, it focuses on the foundational antagonisms of the racially constructed system by identifying whiteness as applying to the category of people who broadly benefit from the existence of the system itself.

Fanon’s work is foundational for anti-colonial thought, so it is a sensible place to begin an analysis of decolonization for any group. At the same time, Fanon’s position on antisemitism is not without controversy. Notably, afro-pessimist theorist Frank Wilderson claims that Fanon characterizes the Holocaust as merely one of many “little family quarrels” between groups of white Europeans, using

this phrase to explain the incomparability between white-white antisemitism and the white-Black legacy of slavery (2010:37–38). However, Wilderson mischaracterizes Fanon’s view, possibly due to an early English edition’s translation. In fact, Fanon writes: “Bien entendu, les Juifs sont brimés, que dis-je, ils sont pourchassés, exterminés, enfournés, mais ce sont là petites histoires familiales” (1952b:93), which translates literally as: “Of course, Jews are bullied, nay, they are hunted, exterminated, put in the oven, but these are small family stories,” or in another translation, “minor episodes in the family history” (1952a:95). This difference in wording is subtle but not at all trivial, and it gets at a crucial point for understanding Jewish subjectivity from the perspective of decolonization. The “family stories” Fanon refers to are the Jewish family’s stories of oppression, not intra-white family quarrels between white non-Jews and white Jews. In other words, Fanon is saying that the Jews have suffered greatly under the antisemitic system, but the violences done to them have been episodic and do not subsume their entire history. The Jewish family has stories of oppression, of death, but they also have stories of thriving, of living. Fanon is contrasting this with the African experience of European colonization and slavery, which he understood as subsuming the category of Black within a totalizing history of oppression.

For Fanon, Jews are undoubtedly among the ranks of the oppressed, and in his 1952 work *Black Skin, White Masks*, he makes great use of the Jewish experience to develop his understanding of the colonized Black condition.³⁴ Black people and Jews pose different existential threats to whiteness, but their connection is that both are perceived as having the potential to overwhelm and appropriate white society. At the same time, the two are not equivalent. Fanon also describes Jews as white, or at least as white-passing in today’s terms, and articulates important differences between anti-Jewish and anti-Black racisms. Crucially, to Fanon, the Black experience of oppression is overdetermined by corporeality, by skin color. Jews, on the other hand, become oppressed when they are discovered to be Jews, and since there is no definite way of identifying Jews in the racial sense, their oppression is contingent on their detection as Jews.

Prodigious attempts have been made on the part of antisemites to develop a system for physically identifying Jews at first sight, but apart from “some debatable features,” Fanon is correct that Jews often pass as not-Jews. It was this physical ambiguity that led to the infamous yellow patches the Nazi government mandated for Jews’ clothing. This element of Jewish racial covertness, which is

³⁴ Fanon’s categories are essentialized; he does not deal with the fact that some Jews are Black and some Black people, Jewish.

the case for Jews of all colors, is critical to understanding antisemitism and how it has shaped Jewish identity. We might say that Jews are underdetermined by corporeality; from the perspective of the antisemite, in a sense Jews only become Jews when they are discovered to be so. That which makes us objectionable resides within and is not always immediately visible from without. In other words, if the essence of Black oppression is embedded in visibility, the essence of Jewish oppression revolves around invisibility.

Finally, while Fanon explores the real historical and experiential differences between constructed social categories of Jew and Black (and Arab), he also notes that the separation and hierarchicalization of these categories is itself a tool of the oppressor (1952a:83). If each group of people views the others as the primary or most immediate threat, then the oppressor class, being insulated from attack and scrutiny, is able to maintain not only material but also hegemonic power.

To sum up, from Fanon we learn that: (1) Jews are an oppressed people; (2) they are oppressed by the same colonial forces that dominate other oppressed peoples; (3) Jews as a group are in many ways closer to the colonizer than other oppressed peoples are; (4) that proximity is itself used by the oppressor to maintain the colonial situation. Fanon gives us a great deal to work with, but despite his extensive discussion of Jews as a comparison group, his final analysis leaves us out. Ultimately, Fanon constructs a dichotomous world – colonizer and colonized – in which it is unclear where the complexities he discusses around the Jewish position fit in. If Jews are sometimes in one category and sometimes in the other, or if Jews simultaneously experience elements of both, then how can Jews pursue decolonization?

Systemic Antisemitism

Like anti-Black racism, antisemitism can be treated as a systemic racism. According to race theorist Joe Feagin, systemic racism can be understood as: “an organized societal whole with many interconnected elements” involving “long term relationships of racialized groups with substantially different material and political-economic interests,” based in “the material reality and social history” of colonial societies (2006: 6–9). To say that antisemitism is a systemic racism is not to discount the ethnic and racial differences between Jews, nor is it to ignore the system’s religious origins. It allows us to analyze anti-Jewish oppression beyond individual prejudice and understand it in terms of historical legacies of differential treatment that are imbedded in institutions and in our experiences of the world.

As a system, antisemitism has developed differently from other racisms. It should not be surprising therefore that attempts to equate antisemitism to anti-Black racism feel uncomfortable and forced. The efforts of liberal Jewish pluralists at analogizing the Black experience in the US with the Jewish experience in Europe are at best misguided and ahistorical (Greenberg 1998). Discussing antisemitism in the terms of other racisms is awkward precisely because it does not fit well within the dichotomous construction those forms of racism are based upon.

The roots of antisemitism date to antiquity, but its contemporary terms first emerged with the racialization of Jews in 15th century Spain and were popularized in reference to the 19th century European “Aryan myth,” a form of racism in which humans are divided into a biologically and culturally determined racial hierarchy. Antisemitism, or anti-Jewish oppression, existed in other regions as well, and although there were at times similarities to European antisemitism, the Jewish experiences in these regions cannot be rolled into a single, universal account. However, the racialization of Jews and the creation of the modern discourse of antisemitism occurred in the context of the production of whiteness in Europe. Without ignoring the historical and contemporary experiences of Jews of varying identities (see Ben Daniel 2016 and Shohat 2006), the European system of racialized antisemitism is the dominant model, having been exported to the world via European colonialism. Though it might seem paradoxical from the perspective of decolonization, it is therefore necessary to begin by unpacking European antisemitism and its impact on Jewish identities.

In order to understand the points inherited from Fanon, there are two significant particularities to antisemitism as a system that we must confront. First, the target group is not placed at the bottom of the social hierarchy but in the middle. Second, outbreaks of widespread violent oppression are episodic and cyclical as opposed to constant.

The first particularity of antisemitism has to do with social position. Antisemitic depictions of Jews have often projected their image in the vilest forms, but systemically it has also afforded many Jews considerable social and economic privilege. While most forms of racism place the target group at the bottom of the hierarchy, antisemitism locates its target in the middle. Jews have often played the social role of merchants, traders, and moneylenders, and at times (such as today’s US) Jews have been admitted into the higher ranks of professional classes and social milieus. Interpreted through the lens of other forms of racism, this privilege appears to be connected to a linear reduction of anti-Jewish oppression and integration of Jews into whiteness. Put simply, the popular notion is that Jews were once oppressed, but now they are not. In the

common identity politics of the left today, this privilege is evidence of Jews' complicity with whiteness and with systemic racism, prompting the role of white allyship with other oppressed racial and ethnic groups. However, historically this privilege has been a double-edged sword, and in fact has been a fundamental aspect of the antisemitic system. As Fanon reminds us, the Jewish threat is a stealthy, intellectual one, so the presence of Jews in prestigious fields, while economically and socially advantageous for a time, also plays directly into the narrative that Jews are covertly dangerous.

The middle position alienates Jews as a group from other groups above and below them in the social hierarchy. From above, they are viewed with suspicion, while from below they often appear as the most visible oppressor – for example as landlords, store owners, and bosses in low-income communities. Georg Simmel famously described the status of Jews as that of the perpetual Stranger (1950). Kafka articulated the condition as being told: “You are not from the castle, you are not from the village, you are nothing.” (1926:46). The presence of this neither-nor population helped to build and maintain modern state structures, and in Europe, white supremacy, essentially by acting as a cushion in between elites and the most acutely oppressed.. As Aurora Levins-Morales puts it:

The whole point of anti-Semitism has been to create a vulnerable buffer group that can be bribed with some privileges into managing the exploitation of others, and then, when social pressure builds, be blamed and scapegoated, distracting those at the bottom from the crimes of those at the top. Peasants who go on pogrom against their Jewish neighbors won't make it to the nobleman's palace to burn him out and seize the fields. (2002, np)

As an identifiable group, Jews accrue limited but real privileges from above, resentment from below, and mistrust from both, until a moment of crisis in which an outburst of violence opens a pressure relief valve for popular discontent over economic or political conditions, directed at the stranger.

The second particularity of antisemitism has to do with its cyclical, episodic nature. In between moments of acute violence, such as pogroms, or most iconically, the Holocaust, there are lengthy periods of calm. The late 1800s were a time of integratedness and relative prosperity for Jews in Western and Central Europe, with many feeling as though antisemitism was a thing of the past. Nineteenth century anarchist Bernard Lazare's personal transformation on the matter of antisemitism is instructive. Lazare was the first Jew to pen a comprehensive sociological volume on antisemitism, published in 1894. He had been convinced that the persistence of antisemitism was at least in part the fault of Jews themselves, and that it would inevitably disappear as both Jews and non-Jews moved away from the prejudices of the past into a revolutionary future – a posi-

tion that is startlingly similar to that of many Jewish activists on the left today. The Dreyfus Affair of 1894 – the scandal in France surrounding the arrest and (false) conviction of a Jewish military officer who had been accused of collaborating with the Germans – drastically changed Lazare’s mind. After witnessing the widespread surge of public and state-sanctioned mistrust and hatred of Jews that followed Dreyfus’ arrest, Lazare committed himself to the fight against anti-semitism. Lazare’s earlier position was partially attributable to the era in which he wrote. Jews in Western Europe appeared to be assimilating into white Christian and even bourgeois society. Anti-Jewish prejudices persisted, but the violence that had been attached to it in previous eras had all but disappeared, making these sentiments appear as a vestige of a bygone age that would surely fade into nonexistence. In Arendt’s words:

After thirty years of a mild, purely social form of anti-Jewish discrimination, it had become a little difficult to remember that the cry, ‘Death to the Jews’ had echoed through the length and breadth of a modern state once before when its domestic policy was crystalized in the issue of antisemitism. (1951:94)

The crystallization of domestic policy around antisemitism that Arendt refers to is not random; it has been central to the development and enactment of systems of oppression by diverting the anger of a portion of the aggrieved population away from the power source of their economic and political grievances. Though we have been in a lull of pogromic antisemitic violence since the Holocaust, this cycle may be becoming ominously visible again with the prospect of rising fascism, first in Europe and now in the US. Karen Brodtkin’s reversal on Jews having become “white folks” following Donald Trump’s election is a poignant contemporary demonstration of what Lazare may have gone through. Brodtkin’s influential work *How Jews Became White Folks* (1998) articulated the now popular position that Jews had moved from an oppressed people to a white people, albeit with some differences, through a process of assimilation in the US. But the evident widespread resonance of violent antisemitic tropes in the Trump campaign along with attacks on Jewish sites and persons prompted the question: can Jews become nonwhite again? According to Brodtkin (2016), this question itself was the answer – whiteness is by definition non-revocable. Part of its constructed social power is protection from such insecurity. In other words, if Jews’ whiteness can be abruptly revoked, then they were never really white in the first place.³⁵ Of course, even when speaking of Ashkenazi Jews, the question should never have been “are Jews actually white?” because whiteness is

³⁵ Some Jewish scholars disagree fervently with this proposition, and argue that at least Ashkenazi Jews have indeed become fully white in the US context (see Biale, Galchinsky, and

an invented and socially constructed category. The question should have been: in what ways do some Jews experience and enact whiteness in a context where these Jews have racial privilege and also where the Jewish appearance as white appears to be part of the antisemitic system?

In times of relative peace, the community feels the ever-increasing need to recover from the previous violent episode and protect itself. During periods of calm, many educated and upwardly mobile Jews have doubled down on their relative privilege and engaged in a form of “respectability politics.” Of course, most Jews did not have the ability to pursue elite social status, but those who did often felt as though doing so protected the community at large (or at least they could justify their pursuit of wealth and prestige through that logic). But the anti-Jewish sentiment never entirely dissipated and Jews as a group have become distinctively sensitive to society’s antisemitic murmurs, consciously or subconsciously gauging the political climate for signs of the next pogrom.

Meanwhile, for generations raised in the times between periods of open anti-Jewish violence, such as today’s US, the absence of the more visible type of brutality that is constantly visited upon other groups sows resentment between Jews and other oppressed peoples. In these eras, many Jews are clearly more privileged than members of other marginalized populations. The visibility of Jews’ privilege and the invisibility of oppression lead to increasing doubt about the persistence or even the reality of antisemitism, and correspondingly, increased antipathy toward Jews by other groups that are collectively worse off in the socio-economic system. The combination of conservative Jews’ claims of whiteness (and even superiority) and liberal Jews’ insistence on analogizing their historical position to other groups’ histories of oppression only serves to exacerbate this bitterness, summed up powerfully in James Baldwin’s 1967 essay, “Negroes Are Anti-Semitic Because They’re Anti-White.” The resentment builds until the next moment of crisis in which a version of the dynamic described by Levins-Morales repeats itself. The social-political middle position and the cyclical, episodic nature of antisemitism are what give this racial system its specific, time-tested character.

In order to talk about decolonization for Jews, therefore, we cannot directly import the categories of colonizer and colonized from an analysis that focuses on a different type of racism. If we are to understand Jewish decolonization we must do so in the context of the particular historical development of the Jewish subject in relationship to the antisemitic system.

Heschel 1998 for some of these debates), while others see the claim to whiteness as itself an aspect of internalized antisemitism (see Lerner 1992).

The Colonized Jewish Subject

The long history of antisemitism has had a significant impact on Jewish subjectivity. In Fanon's psychological analysis, being colonized is not simply a matter of material relationship to power, it is also a personality. The experience of life under a colonial system generates specific inferiority complexes among subjects, which, when these become internalized, in a sense create colonized people. It has been well argued that Jews have inherited a culture characterized by precarity and trauma associated with the extreme violence experienced by previous generations, with Jewish psychological and cultural responses to this violence dating back well before the Holocaust. Here Fanon's observation of "minor episodes in the family history" is both accurate and insufficient. It is not only the moments of violence but the constant threat of them, the precarity, the perpetual lack of belonging laced with fears of betrayal, that have impacted Jewish identity at the deepest level. That Jews were neither of the castle nor of the village had the material effect of making them a vulnerable population, acutely aware that they are exposed to exploitation as scapegoats in moments of crisis. In short, the culture of antisemitism has created barriers to the establishing of solidaristic networks between Jews and non-Jews. Deeper than the objective condition of the stranger is the subjectivity of the stranger, which develops in the absence of trusted community bonds with other groups.

Despite their most ardent attempts, and despite the accumulation of vast wealth by some individuals, upper class Jews were never able to truly break through the "glass ceiling" of whiteness in the fullest sense, with whiteness being understood in the dominant European context as the enduringly superior social-economic caste. Many Jews have sought such inclusion, and arguably some have achieved it, but only to the extent that they as individuals function as white. Individual Jews achieving whiteness in a time and place has not meant that Jews as a group became fully white, even in that same time and place. The unavoidable fact that some achieved elite status – most stereotypically the "House of Rothschild," for example – has not only not shielded Jews from antisemitic violence, but the existence of such elite Jews is integral to the propagation of antisemitism. It was this dynamic that allowed "white" Jews in Western Europe to seemingly overcome antisemitism in the 19th century only to see it come roaring back as the ideological and material foundation of one of the more acutely violent episodes in human history.

Jewish agency has been an integral factor in this process. Arendt follows Lazare in calling the Jew who is ever striving at all cost to succeed in the dominant Gentile world, the parvenu. She contrasts the parvenu with the

conscious pariah, the Jew who understands their positionality and seeks to think outside the bounds of the antisemitic system. The parvenu is essentially a phony, attempting to assimilate by “aping” dominant, elite, white behavior and culture. This imitation is an awkward and exaggerated version of the original, distorted by distance from the source and the desire to fit in. The parvenu is contemptible to Arendt not simply because of their spinelessness, but because their agency is a factor in the continuation of the antisemitic system. Elite treatment of Jews from “the castle” involves negating collective Jewish claims to self-determination in favor of dealing with individual Jews. As French aristocrat Clermont-Tonnerre articulated it, arguing in favor of civil rights for Jews during the French Revolution: “The Jews should be denied everything as a nation but granted everything as individuals” (Judaken 2006:9). Historically, the parvenu accepts and in fact embraces this dynamic, either discarding connections to their Jewish community or tailoring them so as to make them least obnoxious to elite society. Jews’ material proximity to whiteness and upward mobility in the West, most notably in the US, has enabled the parvenu to reinforce liberal capitalism and white supremacy by positioning Jews as success stories of pluralism, with the “right to embrace difference and yet enjoy access to power” (Greenberg 1998).

The parvenu Arendt wrote of is the Jew imitating and striving for whiteness, yet unwittingly playing into the antisemitic system, but in fact there are two parvenu versions. Today, the other version is that of the left Jewish activist who denies the reality of antisemitism either striving to be the “good ally” to the oppressed, a group to which this parvenu denies membership (as a Jew, though not necessarily on other bases) in a bid to gain acceptance.

Marx (1844) famously contributed to debates over the “Jewish Question,” in which Jews struggle between their identity as a distinct people and the identities of the nation-states in which they live as others. In the 19th century, alongside nationalism (from which Zionism grew), and liberalism (from which assimilationism in the US grew), socialism offered an alternative solution to the Jewish question: for the working class of one nation to ally with the working class of other nations on the basis of their shared economic class. To many Jews, the workaround required a prerequisite – to negate the legitimacy of membership in one’s own oppressed community. Indeed, many Jews were active in building 19th century communist and anarchist movements in part as a solution to the Jewish Question, where Jews might gain acceptance not through legitimizing their group but by delegitimizing all national groups. Accordingly, Jews have often sought validation in their participation in social movements of the oppressed

as individuals or on the basis of membership in some other legitimized group of claimants (e.g., workers, women, etc.).

This Left-wing Jewish self-denial has survived the transition from class-based to identity-based politics. In the identity politics framework, Jews are nowhere to be found on the racial spectrum. Jews as a group are not exactly white, but Jews as a group are also not acknowledged as POC. Individual Jews can be viewed as white or as POC on other bases (e.g., skin color, national background), but they are not recognized in the white-POC framework as a group. Jewish participants in Left-wing movements are assumed to identify as white unless they have another legitimate claim to POC status (i.e., Jews of color), and there is little room for affiliation in the struggle for liberation outside of POC status or allyship. Jews are thus disaffirmed as a legitimate people, which is to say as Jews, in terms of the oppressed as well as in terms of the oppressor.

The role of allyship, especially when oriented around criticizing the State of Israel, fits snugly into internalized discomfort and self-loathing that comes with Jewishness in an era when antisemitism is at its least overtly violent (see Lerner 1992). The pursuit of liberation for others alone is a perfect example of this alternative version of Arendt's parvenu, essentially aping white guilt. Like the elite version, this might appear to be the only path for participation in social-political life alongside other groups, but nevertheless it has grave consequences. Anti-semitism has been and continues to be a linchpin of far right ideology (Arendt 1951, Ward 2017), a political force that is a grave resurgent threat to society. By shirking the responsibility to pursue Jewish liberation alongside and in solidarity with other groups' liberation struggles, this parvenu, like the other, not only facilitates the perpetuation of antisemitism, but hinders the prospects for collective human liberation as well.

Acknowledging the antisemitic system in which Jewish identities have evolved is a critical preliminary step to pursuing liberation and decolonization. This is in part because it exposes a particular vantage point that the Jewish position creates. Albert Memmi prefaces his 1957 work *The Colonizer and the Colonized* with an acknowledgement of his social position as a Tunisian Jew. The middle social position of Jews, being among the colonized but with unique proximity to the colonizer (a Jewish status Memmi identifies in both North Africa and in Europe) is, according to Memmi, what allows him to write a book analyzing the personalities of both sides of the colonial relationship: "I was a sort of half-breed of colonization, understanding everyone because I belonged to no one" (1957: xvi). Memmi is able to see through the eyes of the colonizer and the colonized, he says, because his experience and identity simultaneously contain aspects of, and alienate him from, both. From this standpoint Memmi

effectively describes both the colonizer and the colonized in ways that align closely with the descriptions in Fanon's clinical work. Importantly, Memmi's perspective was colored not only by his social-ethnic positionality, but also by his anticolonial ideology.

The reality of antisemitism and its centrality in the ideology of historical and contemporary fascist movements necessitates a Jewish liberation movement. But anti-Jewish oppression and Jewish positionality are unlike that of many other oppressive systems and oppressed ethnicities and nationalities. It should be no surprise then that any Jewish national liberation project that fails to account for the particular dynamics of this positionality will be doomed to failure.

Zionism as (Failed) National Liberation

To Fanon, an oppressed people start with those demands that are most basic and most promising: "Bread and land: how do we go about getting bread and land?" (1961:14). In achieving this, the colonized are forced but also naturally prepared to exact violence upon their oppressors, and indeed must be "determined from the start to smash every obstacle encountered" (ibid:3). That the Jews were an oppressed people leading up to the 20th century just about wherever they lived is clear. In the Zionist story, the Jews did cry out for bread and land, and ultimately smashed all obstacles in their path to win and defend it. Nevertheless, while the legitimacy of other national liberation movements of the 20th century is not questioned today (at least by the Left) Israel is not considered among them; in fact, it is considered an archetypal colonizer. In addition to Palestinian uprisings, Israel now faces a growing boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) campaign, a fracturing diaspora community, internal dissent, and if it were not for the US veto in the United Nations Security Council, international criminal charges. What went wrong?

The simple answer from the Jewish left has been: colonialism. The simple answer from the Jewish right has been: antisemitism. While neither answer might be quite as wrong as the other side would like to believe, the story is much more complex than both.

In line with Fanon's call for "bread and land," to many Zionists the answer to the Jewish Question was autoemancipation, or the Jewish political movement to create a Jewish State. Seminal Zionist thinker Leon Pinsker explained:

Today, when our kinsmen in a small part of the earth are allowed to breathe freely and can feel more deeply for the sufferings of their brothers; today, when

a number of other subject and oppressed nationalities have been allowed to regain their independence, we, too, must not sit a moment longer with folded hands; we must not consent to play forever the hopeless role of the “Wandering Jew.” It is a truly hopeless one, leading to despair. (1882 np)

For the Political Zionist movement, Jews were perpetual strangers precisely because they possessed no sovereign homeland. Pinsker’s reference to his era, when other groups were fighting for national sovereignty, cannot be ignored. This Zionist vision emerged in the context of 19th century European nationalism, which, like socialism, provided a cognitive framework with which to interpret the problems of the world.

As a social group in this nationalist framework, the Jews’ problems were seen to arise not from their alienation from other people but from land. According to Pinsker, Jews could not even dignify themselves to ask for hospitality as foreigners because they had no place from which to collectively offer to repay it. A state would provide physical security, but more importantly it would provide the existential foundation for recognition of the Jewish people. For Herzl too, recognition in the modern world was bound to statehood and sovereignty – Jews would only be able to achieve the recognition required for liberation from antisemitism if they controlled a state. Whereas Judaism had required Jews to look to G-d for protection and guidance in the diaspora, Zionists, who emerged from the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment), now encouraged Jews to look to the State.

Among many dilemmas for this agenda, one stands out. The Jews were a diasporic community; many felt native to nowhere but Palestine, but relatively few of them actually lived there. In the 19th century, Zionists (mainly from Europe) began urging Jews to move to Ottoman Palestine and establish land rights. Whether or not its adherents knew it, the Zionist project was at a crossroads: How would their communities relate to non-Jewish Palestinians?

While their desire and initiative to liberate their people from oppression is admirable, the Zionist movement emerged from a European nationalist zeitgeist in which few were considering the rights of non-European peoples, and the leaders of the dominant model of Zionism did not break from that mindset. Beyond this context, Herzl and other Political Zionists misjudged several crucial elements. Herzl’s nationalism, combined with his belief that all Gentile nations were inherently antisemitic, led to a realpolitik obsessed with achieving statehood above all else. Herzl correctly identified the antisemitic trap Jews had been caught in, where all Jews were conflated with upper class Jews, who were pushed into professional and financial roles then blamed for systemic failures. However, the assumption that all non-Jewish nations were inherently antisemitic foreclosed the possibility of solidarity with other oppressed groups, namely Arab Palestinians,

who also sought liberation from foreign rule, only leaving space for cynical bargaining over self-interest.

Despite internal debates (for example, some argued for an Arab-majority state with minority ethnic rights for Jews and some pushed for alliance with the Soviet sphere of influence), this avenue ultimately brought Zionist leaders to the negotiating table of global imperial powers that were able to produce the results they sought – a sovereign state carved from the waning British Empire. The British in particular were adept at defining the terms of their colonies' identities and territories, imposing both borders and colonial subjectivities that would survive local national liberation movements (Mamdani 2012). “The real anti-Semites... wanted to preserve the availability of the Jews as a scapegoat in case of domestic difficulties” (Arendt 1978:172) and the creation of an Israeli state did just that on an international scale. Arendt was part of a dissenting wing of the Zionist movement that sought a “national homeland without a national state,” and following their political defeat, she presciently articulated the implications of allying with European powers, saying that the autoemancipation project was ending not only in national but in “chauvinist claims – not against the foes of the Jewish people, but against its possible friends and present neighbors” (ibid:140). In short, Herzl's Zionism led the Jewish people through a backdoor into the very same position they sought deliverance from, only on a global scale.

Since the Political Zionists' success, statehood has provided a measure of protection for individual Jews who live in Israel, but it has also created a lightning rod for material attacks by neighbors and political attacks by anti-imperialist forces. The Israeli government's preoccupation with validation of its right to exist and the panic surrounding the recent “nuclear deal” between the US and Iran are but two examples demonstrating just how ineffective statehood has been in alleviating Jewish insecurity on any level.

This pathological insecurity (which Fanon notes in all colonized peoples) combined with the material benefits of being a colonizer, has led Israelis to perpetually alienate themselves from and abuse their neighbors, as Israel maintains a military occupation of the West Bank and blockade of Gaza, neither granting Palestinians citizenship nor allowing them to secede. To say nothing of the abhorrent violence of the occupation, a militarily controlled territory under which people live with different sets of rights and laws depending on geography, ethnicity, and religion should be viscerally repugnant to any sense of justice, and is a status quo that is patently unacceptable in the norms of the 21st century world.

The Zionist project as Herzl articulated it set the Jewish State on this trajectory. Before, during, and following its founding, Zionist and Israeli leaders allied with colonial forces, playing the middle position in between the imperial

“center” of the US and British Empires and the “periphery” of the Arab and Persian Middle East and North Africa. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that early Hebrew tribes were often used by pharaohs as mercenary forces, positioned on borderlands to buffer the Egyptian Empire with the Assyrians and the Nubians, where they took both casualties and national blame during warfare (Hull 2009). In a sense, Herzl’s movement led Jews out of their modern middle position as stranger-merchants back to their ancient middle position as stranger-mercenaries.

Though the Zionist movement’s goal was liberation from antisemitism, the identity of the Jewish people as scapegoats in service of rulers has survived the founding of the State of Israel unchecked. Worse still, the material advantages of colonial exploitation (Shafir 1989) combined with the parvenu impulse to “ape the gentiles” (Arendt 1978:68) resulted in the Israeli government molding itself in the image of the Western imperial power, including all of the barbarity that comes with it, and pitching Jews to the world as racially white. The founding of the State of Israel in this way – that is, in lock step with systemic antisemitism – perpetuated a paradox from which Jews as a people have yet been unable to escape. The State of Israel as it currently exists traps the Jewish people in liberation limbo, keeping it at odds with its neighbors and reliant upon ultimate salvation by neo-imperial powers.

Re-Colonizing Jewishness

Decolonization “sets out to change the order of the world” (Fanon 1961:2). This process involves momentous historical events, but the project begins and ends with human subjects. In the attempt to liberate Jews via state power in Israel, Zionist philosophy created an image of a “decolonized subject,” a Jewish New Man. This Zionist version of the Haskalachic “New Jew” was dubbed the Sabra, after the Hebrew name of the prickly pear cactus that grew in Palestine: hard and thorny on the outside but soft and sweet on the inside. The Sabra Jew was born in Palestine, spoke Hebrew as a first language, and fiercely defended the “homeland.” The Sabra was the photo negative of the shtetl Jew; whereas antisemitic propaganda had made the diaspora Jew out to be weak, sickly, pale, ugly, cowardly, and greedy, the Sabra was strong, healthy, handsome, hardworking, daring, brave, and self-sacrificing (Zerubavel 2002). This was the idealized anti-diaspora Jew; the sort of “Man” Jewish people would become in a country of their own.

In seeking to overcome European antisemitic stereotypes, the new Israelis in fact adopted many of the standards of their (former) oppressors, including Orientalist views of Arabs (Sela 2005). The Sabra Jews walked an awkward line, attempting to become natives who, as Ella Shohat puts it, “live in the ‘East’ without being of it” (2006:331). Though they struggled against the colonizers in one way, they embodied them in another. This unintentional but nevertheless close association between the New Jew and the old antisemite went beyond image – it actually required marginalizing and silencing the voices and identities of Holocaust survivors, upon whose experience their movement was being justified, in favor of an invented narrative of purity and strength (Almog 2000:82–84).

To Fanon, decolonization involved violence against the colonizer as a mode of production of the new man, as it helped the colonized to defeat and transcend their inferiority complex, specifically as opposed to violence against themselves and their oppressed neighbor, which would perpetuate it.³⁶ The Sabra Jews in their most iconic form, the soldiers of the *palmach* (Jewish militias in the War of Independence), epitomize the tragic embodiment of this failure, bitterly fighting their “cousins” for the sake of a system that ultimately exploits them. Today, agents of a state that claims to exist for the representation and protection of a historically oppressed people inflict traumatic violence upon their Palestinian neighbors, and, ironically, deny them access to a state with which to represent and protect themselves.

Herzl prided himself on his deep understanding of the antisemite. To Arendt, Herzl’s understanding of antisemites ran so deep that he not only trusted them in allyship with the Zionist mission, but maybe began to think like them too. From this perspective it should not be surprising that the entire Zionist project has transformed in the image of the oppressor, not only externally but internally too. Envisioned as a place of safety for all Jews worldwide, Israel has in fact codified, racialized, and hierarchicalized previously fluid categories of Jew and Arab as well as “white” Ashkenazi Jews and Sephardi, Mizrahi, Beta Israel, and other Jews of color (Domínguez 1989, Motzafi-Haller 2008). But neither a state, nor cooperation with European powers, nor the adoption of oppressive systems in the European image were able to liberate the Jewish people from the antisemitic system. As Arendt anticipated: “The antisemitism of tomorrow will assert that Jews not only profited from the presence of the foreign big powers in that region but actually plotted it and hence are guilty of the consequences” (1978:133). We can

³⁶ Fanon used the term “new men” to refer to decolonized subjects who have remade themselves (1961:2), following both Freud’s emphasis on the pathology of men and linguistically androcentric norms. Its patriarchal implication in this case should not go unnoticed.

see this phenomenon playing out in the discourse on the left today, where the US and Israel are held up as the prime agents of imperialism – and not necessarily in that order.

With the State of Israel claiming to be the true home of all Jews, Jewish communities worldwide have foundered in the effort to think and act outside the parvenu paradigm. Until today we have been unable to build a movement for Jewish liberation in solidarity with the liberation of all oppressed peoples, and all humanity. With the formal end of the exile in 1948, this is now the Jewish Question.

Decolonizing Jewishness

To Arendt, the emancipation of the Jews ought to have been an “admission of Jews as Jews into the ranks of humanity, rather than a permit to ape the gentiles or an opportunity to play the parvenu” (1978:68). As the Israeli State, marketed as a liberator, actively oppresses an entire population under its control, Arendt’s critique stands today. Perhaps not ironically, the tzabar cactus for which the Sabra Jew was named is not native to Palestine, but was imported as a desert-friendly crop in the early 19th century (Griffith 2004). From the beginning, the new identity was not based on decolonizing, but on recolonizing. The route Zionism took re-enacted rather than healed Jewish cultural trauma, and projected it onto another people.

The struggle for Jewish recognition cannot be won from within a parvenu mentality. So long as Jews as a people consent to the middle role in the service of the oppressor, we will be perpetual strangers, whether or not we have a temple, or capital, or a state. The belonging we truly seek cannot emanate from the castle, but can only come from the village. Rabbi Steinlauf was therefore on the right track when he wrote his controversial 2015 essay advocating for Jews to renounce whiteness. He was heavily criticized, often fairly, for glossing over what it would actually mean to “renounce privilege,” for ignoring Jews of color, and of course, for not mentioning the Occupation. All of these problems have a simple and powerful, though admittedly painful, solution: the decisive step out of the colonial mindset is removing the white mask in all of its forms and confronting the colonizer within.

Confronting the colonizer within is an integral part of confronting the colonizer without. Rabbi Hillel’s famous set of questions – “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?” – continues to stand as a beautiful summation of what is required of the Jewish

people. All three questions can be understood in this context as rhetorical; the first implies the need to fight for ourselves as Jews, the second implies the need to fight for others in solidarity, and the third implies a sense of urgency. Pinsker began his seminal 1882 pamphlet on Zionism with this quote but, incredibly, he left out the second question! For the thinkers of Political Zionism, being “for others” was so antithetical to their project they did not want the revered Talmudic rabbi’s second question to be considered at all.

Unfortunately, many Jewish activists in Palestinian or other liberation work today metaphorically omit Hillel’s first question instead; they focus on being for Palestinian liberation, or for the liberation of other oppressed groups without considering the implications of not also being for ourselves as Jews. While important, countering false claims of antisemitism against pro-Palestinian organizing levied by the Jewish right and protesting Zionist organizations in allyship with Palestinians should not, as some suggest, be the sole purpose of Jewish voices in the struggle. The work of decolonizing Jewishness, which is a personally and culturally constructive as well as destructive process, is a prerequisite for any liberated future that involves us as a people, and is a vital element in the broader political struggle against the forces of the far right. Jewish liberation requires the Jewish fight against antisemitism for our liberation and autonomy, and also solidarity with the struggles of other oppressed groups – in particular the Palestinian struggle – for their liberation and autonomy.

Herzlian Zionism failed; it created a catastrophe for Palestinians while failing to liberate the Jewish people from antisemitism. There is every reason to believe we can yet create a truly decolonized Jewishness in the continuation of the liberatory movement against antisemitism, but this can only be done if it is melded with the struggle against the colonialism entrenched in our previous attempt at decolonization. Our struggle for our liberation is now inexorably bound up in the liberation of those we disenfranchised and continue to oppress in the attempt to gain liberation in Israel. Our position imposes a Jewish version of what W.E.B. Du Bois called double consciousness (1903), where we are not forced to see through the eyes of the oppressor as well as the oppressed for survival, but we actually are simultaneously both the as part of the same identity.

According to Fanon, an act of violence was required for the colonized to overcome their inferiority complex and decolonize. For Jews, who have become both colonizers and colonized, the first act of symbolic violence must be against ourselves. This violence is both symbolic and internal, but is no less painful. We must rebel against the internalized colonizer in ourselves, embedded in our very subjectivities, and we must rebel against the part of our community that pursues literal colonization of others, trapping the Jewish people in the global middle

position. This generation of Jews must discover if we will play the 21st century parvenu or find our place in the grand struggle for people's liberation by waking to the contradictions within, standing in solidarity with other oppressed peoples without, and seeking to take an active role in our ongoing history.

Emma Lazarus said: "Until we are all free, we are none of us free." I am inclined to believe this is true, but it is unavoidably true that Jews today cannot be free anywhere until Palestinians are free in Palestine. In and of itself, this is not a political solution. But if we as Jews take the projects of Jewish liberation and human liberation seriously, it is a value, indeed an identity, upon which any political solution must be built. As Jacob had to wrestle with and defeat G-d for our Biblical people to transcend, so must we wrestle with and defeat our colonial selves to transcend. Like Jacob, we will be injured in the process, but the fight itself is required in order to open the door to a new covenant – one between Jews and our cousins.

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Contemporary Israeli Anarchism

A History

CrimethInc.

November 11, 2013

Our anonymous interlocutor traces the prehistory and development of contemporary Israeli anarchism, touching on the origins of punk and the animal rights movement in Israel and presenting a critical analysis of the trajectory of Anarchists Against the Wall. He concludes by reflecting on the function of nonviolence rhetoric in the conflict between Israel and Palestine. We strongly recommend this interview to anyone interested in the Israel/Palestine conflict or, for that matter, in the strategic challenges of formulating an anarchist opposition in adverse conditions.

Is there any continuity connecting the contemporary Israeli anarchist movement to currents preceding the countercultural surge of the early '90s?

None whatsoever, unfortunately. Then again, it might not be *that* unfortunate.

Throughout the hundred years preceding, Israeli anarchists played a part in some successful endeavors, but always at a costly price: the subjugation of the political to the social, which was basically BuberSpeak for attempting to build new worlds *around* the existing one, rather than on its smoldering ashes. The *Kibbutzim* (Jewish socialist agricultural settlements) serve as a cautionary tale—should yet another such tale be needed—of anarchists becoming pawns in authoritarian projects through tentative collaborations based on “temporarily” compromising our *confrontational* and *political* rejection of hierarchy.

Strange as it may sound today, many secular European Jews at the turn of the previous century saw a tacit bond between Zionism and anarchism. Ghettoized and excluded from the national ethos of their own countries, they gravitated towards tendencies that—in their personal lives, if not in the eyes of history—offered opposing magnetic polarities to push back with: anarchism, Marxism, and Zionism. Ironically, as documented by anarchist writers like Voline in Russia, large parts of the Jewish ghettos perceived Zionism to be the craziest and *most utopian* of the three.

So, in what could be seen as a precursor to the pitfalls of modern identity politics, the ties binding the old anarchists to their Jewish identity enabled their Umanità Nova, their vision of a new humanity, to be folded into and superseded by Zionism’s vision of a new Jewry, the “Muscle Jew” of Israel, set to replace the

frightened ghetto one. On the ground, one of the forms this supersession took was the fast-paced morph of egalitarian *Kibbutzim* communities into strategic colonial instruments at the hands of a nascent state bent on driving indigenous populations off the land.

In this light, it should come as no surprise that in 1994, the first vinyl release of the first Israeli anarchist hardcore band was titled, simply, “Renounce Judaism.”

With the establishment of a Jewish state, the Labor Zionism anarchists discovered that the operation had succeeded and the patient had died; much like their contemporaries in the October revolution, the Chinese May 4th Movement, and Madero’s Mexican uprising—and perhaps yesterday’s Occupy movement—their sole reward was having been forgotten players in birthing the entity that deemed them irrelevant.

The end of the Second World War and subsequent immigration of more European Jews into the newly-established Israeli state, with some anarchists amongst them, further galvanized the tension between the political and the social, between identities freely chosen and identities born into, “anarchist” and “Jewish”—a tension nowhere as critical, of course, as within the borders of a Jewish *archos*.

Coming straight out of the Polish ghettos, they proved unwilling or unable to take the ghetto out of their émigré selves, and rather than flying the black flag defiantly they simply circled the wagons; in their defense, though, surviving the *Holocaust* might do that to you. They organized themselves into historical societies, cultural associations, philosophical discussion circles, and literary study groups, communicating chiefly in Yiddish, a choice oddly reminiscent of that other closed, black-clad Jewish milieu with its back turned on society—orthodox Hasidic Jews—and in stark contrast to the earlier anarchists of the *Kibbutzim*, who spoke Hebrew. During the ’50s and ’60s, the Freedom Seekers Association, Israel’s main anarchist group, produced a monthly bilingual publication called *Problemen* alongside several books, and maintained a library of classic anarchist literature (again, mostly in Yiddish and Polish) as well as a large hall in central Tel Aviv, drawing hundreds of attendees to non-threatening conferences where anarchy was theorized to death alongside Hassidic parables.

Naturally, introverted and self-contained cultural gatherings came at the expense of agitation, outreach, and organizing, which brings to mind certain punk rock scenery we know only too well. In fact, there doesn’t seem to have been even so much as an attempt to build a political anarchist *movement*.

One anecdote from that era illustrates it perfectly: a Shin Bet agent (Israel’s internal security service) came down to an anarchist meeting one day. “I heard

you have been discussing the possible ramifications of assassinating the prime minister,” he said worryingly.

“Indeed we have,” came the reply, “but we were talking about the prime minister of *Poland*.” The agent left and they were never bothered again.

I should note that all was *not* so quiet on the Middle Eastern front at that time. The famous seamen’s strike, for example—the most radical and violent strike in Israeli history, which for 40 days brought the country’s only commercial port to a standstill—took place in 1951. Incidentally, it was led by a young sailor whose grandson would become a key organizer in Israeli anarchism from the ’90s onwards. 1962 saw a series of wildcat strikes in the wake of the devaluation of the Israeli pound. Through all this, serious disturbances against ethnic discrimination erupted, led by Jews from Middle Eastern and North African countries living in *Ma’abarot*, refugee absorption camps. In 1949, during one such disturbance, angry mobs smashed windows and ripped doors off their hinges at the temporary Israeli Parliament building; in the following year, a leader of similar protests by Yemenite Jews was the first citizen to be killed by an Israeli policeman’s bullet. This, of course, without even mentioning the various forms of resistance Palestinian Arabs were immersed in at the time.

None of the above, as far as I know, elicited any participation or material support from Israel’s exilic anarchists, who seem to have been more attuned to Yiddish labor struggles in New York’s Lower East Side than in their new surroundings.

Zionism and Judaism aside, another key issue on which post-’90s anarchists broke from the old guard was our blasphemous attitude towards the IDF, the Israeli “Defense” Forces. American anarcho-syndicalist house painter Sam Dolgoff, who visited Israel in the early ’70s, captured the prevailing attitude of the old-timers (as well as his own, apparently):

“...Israeli comrades are forced, like the other tendencies, to accept the fact that Israel must be defended. [...] In discussion with Israeli anarchists it was emphasized that the unilateral dismantling of the Israeli state would not at all be anarchistic. It would, on the contrary, only reinforce the immense power of the Arab states and actually expedite their plans for the conquest of Israel. [...] the necessity for defense of Israel—freely acknowledged by our comrades—depends upon putting into effect the indispensable military, economic, legislative and social measures needed to keep Israel in a permanent state of war preparation. The Israeli anarchists [...] know only too

well that curtailing the power of the state under such circumstances offers no real alternative.”

Correspondingly, when an anarcho-punk collective stirred up controversy with a headline-grabbing anti-IDF issue of its *War of Words* fanzine in 1996, they were reproached in no uncertain terms by the late Joseph Luden, editor of the aforementioned *Problemen* and author of the book *A Short History of the Anarchist Idea*, who expressed a deep disappointment and insisted that the armed forces are “not the enemy.” To us, this showed that the primordial Jewish fear of the Pogrom, of Romans or Crusaders or Cossacks or Arabs awaiting their chance to gut us in our sleep, was strong enough to cloud the judgment of even lifelong anarchists, much like other cultural poisons we drink in with our mother’s milk and never fully get out of our systems.

Of course, with the Palestinian death toll reaching its current dizzying heights, attacks on the very *existence* of a military apparatus, not just its prevalence, have become a more common feature of Israeli radicalism; but the early ’90s were a different story. Practically all our fellow radicals—when not preoccupied with issues such as the then-popular and extremely safe “religious coercion” theme—were adamant in sharpening a distinction between military duty inside the Green Line (the *de facto* Israeli borders), which they considered a moral obligation, and troops deployed *outside* of it, in occupied Palestinian territory, which they thought we should strategically oppose and be jailed for. Even anti-Zionist Trotskyist splinter groups and fringe offshoots, who were basically in the same toy boat as us, encouraged their members to join the military, albeit with the aim of relating better to the average worker.

The 1990s generation of Israeli anarchists was in a position to bring something unique to the table—and we did. At first glance, you could diagnose it as Oppositional Defiant Disorder, perhaps, or revolution for the hell of it: a collective middle finger to the army with no blueprints or analyses or structural adjustment plans to replace it. “Serious” revolutionaries frowned upon this, of course. In hindsight, however, I think singling out militarism showed good instincts, a fine-tuned sense of the changing nature of a key battleground—a battleground that was and remains extremely important in both symbolic and practical terms.

Furthermore, it showed that we knew enough to trust our immediate experiences, letting them guide our decisions. All of us were close to the age at which the state’s attempt to enlist us into Israel’s mandatory military service—and the scars we earned fighting that—were still fresh.

To be clear, I don’t want to come off as overly critical of the older generations of Israeli anarchists. They were extremely good at many things, just not particu-

larly at being anarchists, or rather at being *anarchic*—at recognizing and prioritizing the projects that are exclusive to anarchist thinking, that *no one else* can offer. In a country where all political factions—left, right and center—had begun as radical subversives not long ago, perhaps “anarchist” should have meant *rebel* rather than *revolutionary*. Nevertheless, I *do* have a tremendous respect for the old-school.

How did Israeli anarchism arrive with or emerge from the countercultural surge of the early '90s? What characteristics does it retain from that era? What advantages and disadvantages do those confer?

Even after having been personally involved in both '90s anarchism and the Israeli counterculture of that time, I'm not sure whether modern Israeli anarchism emerged out of the punk explosion, as in other countries during that decade, or whether both were products of the zeitgeist in equal measure. I guess that should be left to the social historians—or maybe the physicists, since Newton's third law clearly states that all forces are *interactions* between different bodies.

Speaking of physics—if nature indeed abhors a vacuum, it must have been royally pissed off at us as the '90s rolled in. The first Palestinian Intifada had lost momentum and direction after three long years, essentially ending at the Madrid Conference of 1991 (though officially only at the 1993 Oslo Accords). This period, right up to the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in late 1995 and the right-wing electoral victory six months later, was marked by a strong sense of euphoria and optimism in the ranks of the left: an uplifting feeling that Peace, ever elusive, was right around the corner, a mere treaty away. Radicals—including anarchists, with the exception of a single individual, if I recall our meetings correctly—were completely co-opted by the so-called Peace Process, accepting it as the only game in town.

There were two reasons for this. First, Fatah opposition to the process had collapsed and Palestinian society seemed to have embraced it wholly, leaving us hesitant to come off as “more Catholic than the Pope.” Second, the right's hysterical objection to it lulled us further into thinking this was, on the whole, a positive process. Lesson learned: never choose political paths based on which troll is under what bridge.

However, there was a silver lining in our clouded judgment. As Peace dropped a few spots on the list of burning issues to attend to, other issues naturally climbed up, and unfamiliar concepts were sucked into the resulting vacuum, suggesting new ways to approach the old problems. And since people are not one-dimensional, with the changes in politics came cultural changes as well: radical ecology and animal liberation, for example, previously unheard of, burst onto the scene shoulder-to-shoulder with a new counterculture of noise, 'zines, street art, international contacts, the do-it-yourself ethic, communal living arrangements, infoshops, independent media, and cross-issue alliances and activist practices. Anarchy, explicit or implicit but always *_com_plicit*, was at the heart of this.

Punk is a good reference point, although this countercultural surge was wider and more aesthetically diverse. Contrary to what many assume, punk's influence was already roughing the edges of Israeli alternative culture in the late '70s, and throughout the '80s punks formed bands, played shows, and released demo cassettes. However, the concept of a "scene" as social unit simply hadn't occurred to anyone. Punk remained extrinsic to cultural identity and thus punks stayed atomized and fragmented, related primarily through this very disconnection, which I'm guessing seemed part of how they thought punk should "feel."

Likewise, there were a handful of anarchists in the '70s and '80s—something I glossed over in answering the previous question—but they did not manage to push past their characterization as isolated outliers. Indeed, this characterization was generally self-imposed. In 1973, for example, on the eve of the Yom Kippur War, a three-man commune calling itself The Black Front — Freaky Anarchist Group put out a humorous one-off publication with heavy R. Crumb influences, *Freaky*, while in the '80s three Israeli-Palestinian brothers set up NILAHEM, "Youth for Liberty and Struggle," a small anarchist group in the northern city of Haifa. One of those brothers, our comrade Juliano Mer-Khamis, was murdered by a masked gunman in Jenin refugee camp last year.

Not until the '90s was there a conscious effort to broaden anarchist practice by advancing it further down the trajectory *group* → *organization* → *network* → *movement*. In a heartwarming case of quantum wishful thinking—or was it an attempt to confuse the enemy?—the main anarchist group of the early 90's lacked a formal name and simply called itself "Anarchist Movement."

So, like a real-life chiasmus, '90s punk borrowed from anarchists the autonomous self-organization, the do-it-yourself scene, while '90s anarchists borrowed from punk the chromosome of *expansion*, propagation driven by a cultural sense of urgency. Through the logic of "if you build it, they will come,"

each cured the other of its respective *delusions of petitesse*. And, of course, both reinforced in each other the notion that one needn't give a fuck about rules.

The question of what characteristics contemporary Israeli anarchism retains from the '90s is interesting, but a more poignant question would be what characteristics it has lost. In four words: *the element of surprise*.

In the early '90s, we tried our best to avoid becoming “far left,” trapped at this or that edge of the political spectrum with nowhere to go but center; instead, we simply did not register on it. Our natural habitat was the left, true—the progressives, the bleeding hearts, the peace camp—but we moved in it like some sort of new and wild exotic animal. We were composed of post-leftists and past-leftists, but we all agreed we didn't want anarchy reduced to the conjugation of a leftist verb. Some pigeonholed us as yet another type of commies, while others interpreted our unconventionality to mean we had nothing relevant to offer those who, in the end, see their lives as conventional. But a lot of people, especially younger ones, were intrigued and open to new messages. The '00s, however, changed that.

Around 2003, during the low tide of the *second* Intifada—one could say parallel but underneath it—a popular struggle against the Israeli Separation Wall exploded, a struggle which could be seen as a sort of different, *third* Intifada. It began—and still rages on—in a handful of small West Bank villages whose lands were being confiscated, either to construct the wall or to fatten up the ever-expanding Jewish settlements. Almost immediately, anarchists recognized this as a situation where our position as Israeli citizens, coupled with our unique brand of confrontational praxis, could make a significant contribution, and thus Anarchists Against the Wall was born.

This was a calculated gamble. In many ways it *did* pay off, but the extreme intensity of that particular struggle made it inevitable that all other facets of our politics would be eclipsed by it, which is precisely what happened. Soon, the term anarchist became synonymous with one thing and one thing only—Palestinian nationalism—through a polarizing dynamic we had known we wouldn't escape. The opportunity to engage the state in a violent, bloody, and charged conflict—although not in an ideal setting for anti-nationalists—came at the expense of our effectiveness in practically all other arenas. We were forced, if you will, to make a choice between being an *attractive* prospect to the Israeli public and a *threatening* one to the Israeli state; we didn't manage to beat the odds by reconciling the two.

Besides Anarchists Against the Wall, what other initiatives arose in that era? Describe, for example, the origins and trajectory of the contemporary animal rights movement in Israel.

I think the most interesting part of the Israeli animal rights movement—certainly the most relevant to radicals—is its inception. Not to oversell it, but it was one of the few genuine *structural* anarchist conspiracies I know of in the last 140 years, and a farsighted one at that. Plus, it worked; perhaps too well.

Needless to say, when I speak of real anarchist conspiracies I do so treading lightly, given the proclivity of law enforcement agencies to conjure up fake ones, whether in Bologna, Moscow, Cleveland, or the village of Tarnac, France. But this was a conspiracy of an entirely different kind.

The concept of animal rights arrived late on the Israeli scene, towards the early '90s, courtesy of anarchists. There had been an anti-vivisection society since '83, but it was caught up in the scientific angle and shied away from the broader implications of its own ethical concerns. Just to illustrate how late things bloomed here: the first book in Hebrew on animal experimentation came out in '91, the first law even to mention the subject was passed in '94, and a translation of Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* was not published until '98.

As I mentioned, at the beginning of the '90s, new perspectives took precedence over Palestine-centered politics—a tendency reversed, quite violently, come the new millennium. As anarchists were leaving no stone unturned in search for new ways to amplify our impact on society, some concluded that, rather than advancing anarchism as a package deal, it would be more effective to introduce it through the prism of a single issue. And so began constant discussions, formal and informal, in sunbathed public parks as well as poorly guarded high-school shelters at midnight, all focused on a single question: which issue could offer the firmest foot in the backdoor, through which to disseminate the widest assortment of radical ideas?

Brief tactical forays were made by some into the terrain of nuclear disarmament, Israel's taboo public secret, as well as social ecology, with the group Green Action, but ultimately we realized that a new and unspoiled lump of clay was needed. And none fit the bill like the hitherto unknown, seemingly safe concept of fighting for the rights of seals or elephants—as fur shops and circuses were the first two major targets of local animal rights campaigns.

While this focal shift was conscious and premeditated, it should not be seen as some manipulative ploy or cynical *The Man Who Was Thursday*-type stuff. Tactical considerations aside, we really *were* passionate and sincere about ending nonhuman suffering—other motives were merely an added bonus, a realization that of all the various injustices we could be organizing around at that particular time and place, animal rights happened to be the most conducive.

Our first group was called, simply, Anonymous, a strange, somewhat dark name for an animal rights organization, unless you keep in mind it was a kind of anarchist front. Besides the aim of radicalizing young animal-lovers who might join in, it had another, more practical aim: to recruit people for clandestine Animal Liberation Front activities. Anonymous' small headquarters, filled to the brim with information about various radical struggles, nonhuman and human, was also the nocturnal rendezvous point for almost all ALF activity in Tel Aviv during that time; it was even conveniently located on Ben Yehuda street, the very same street where most of the cities' furriers had set up shop! According to interrogators at the adjacent Dizengoff police station, at least, Anonymous activists were the ones who introduced Israeli storeowners (and cops) to superglued locks.

Today, Anonymous for Animal Rights as it is now known, has grown into Israel's equivalent of PETA, the biggest, most respected mainstream organization in the field, complete with lobbyists and reform-oriented consumer campaigns. This was the end-process of a gradual influx of activists who were not in on the original plan, people whose entire scope truly began and ended with animal rights. Once enough of them were in the core group, the inevitable power struggles and infighting ensued, prompting anarchists to accept the fact that their work there was done—the wooden puppet had become a real boy. It was time to pursue other avenues.

Of course, working above *and* underground at the same time is not a sustainable strategy for radical organizers, to say the least. But as we learned during those few years, if you are small enough, know your coordinates and read the political map accurately, you might be able to pull it off. It's also not without its perks: somewhere in the middle of that period, for example, I distributed home-made stickers calling for Jewish settlers to be shot in the head, signed with a circled A. The biggest Israeli newspaper at that time made the mistake of reporting that the symbol stood for Anonymous, the animal rights group, so naturally, we sued for defamation of character and settled out of court for a hefty sum, which kept our political activities afloat for a while longer. Who says you can only wear *one* hat at a time, right?

One final thing to note regarding trajectories is the elegant dance of cyclical synergy between anarchism and animal rights. I'm not sure how widely known this is outside of Israel, but just as the animal rights movement was kick-started by anarchists, Anarchists Against the Wall was in turn conceived by animal rights activists, two carrier waves in small congruent circles that would fit neatly within the dialectical materialism of scientific socialists—if by “scientific” we meant *chaos theory*.

One Struggle was a veganarchist group formed around 2002 by some of the people who had left Anonymous in the aforementioned split. Although its professed aim was to engage in antispeciesist agitation from an antiauthoritarian perspective, it succeeded chiefly in implanting antispeciesist perspectives into antiauthoritarian agitation.

In late 2003, as part of a joint effort with Palestinians, One Struggle activists took part in an attempt to dismantle one of the separation barrier's gates near the West bank village of Mas'ha, four miles from the Green Line. As in previous One Struggle actions, the accompanying press release was signed with a fictitious name, randomly chosen at the last minute: in this case, “Anarchists Against the Wall.” Israeli soldiers reacted harshly during the action—which, by the way, was successful—firing live ammunition and severely injuring one activist; it was the first time ever that the Israeli army had opened fire on Jewish citizens. In the heat of the ensuing media frenzy, the name “Anarchists Against the Wall” became indelibly etched into the public mind (sometimes as “Anarchists Against Fences”). One Struggle disbanded after a few years, having fulfilled its historically ordained role—but AAtW carried on in full swing.

Comrades visiting Israel are often surprised at how prevalent antispeciesist discourse is among local anarchists. In fact, even Israeli radicals of the non-anarchist variety needed a few good years to adjust. When Ta'ayush (a radical Israeli organization) attempted to organize the reconstruction of battery cages destroyed by Israeli soldiers in the village of Hirbet Jbara, for example, this met harsh opposition from anarchists; the same thing happened when Gush Shalom organized a solidarity action with Gazan fishermen. The preceding paragraphs shed some light on the historical context for this.

What were the dynamics between those campaigns and Anarchists Against the Wall as the latter came to define Israeli anarchism?

When discussing today's Israeli anarchists, one should keep in mind we are not talking about thousands or even hundreds of people, but *dozens*. Concepts like "movement," "characteristics," "dynamics," or "tendencies" should therefore be scaled down to an almost intrapersonal size. In all honesty, two roommates and a small wireless router can become an anarchist tendency here, for better or for worse.

Regarding the question: first of all, as I've already lamented—and in spite of its crucial contributions—AAtW wrote us back into the left/right binary code that defines and confines Israel's political spectrum, the same spectrum we had tried to escape a decade earlier. We have been "far left" ever since and, unsurprisingly, it has limited our room for maneuver in other arenas. To make matters worse, this binarization was swallowed whole and internalized, slowing down our political metabolism, as we became more and more dismissive of anything and everything that did not speak its name clearly in the language of left/right, Zionism/Intifada dichotomy. One Struggle was at times a fairly good example of this, as was Black Laundry, an anarchist LGBTQ group that began protesting Gay Pride events around the same time, under the slogan "There is no pride in the occupation."

As AAtW gained momentum, the mere act of participating in radical queer actions, for instance, without mentioning the occupation, became tantamount to "Pinkwashing". When the 9th international Queeruption gathering, held in Tel Aviv in 2006, coincided with Israel's heaviest bombing of Lebanon in 24 years—also known as the second Lebanon War—as well as with the annual WorldPride events scheduled to take place in Jerusalem (but later cancelled), tensions rose violently to the surface at an anti-homophobia-cum-anti-militarist protest in Jerusalem; you can read about it more in the Queeruption fanzine, specifically the "You Can Call Me Gay"/"You Can Call Me An Anarchist" exchange.

Generally speaking, it felt as if failure to link everything *explicitly* and *incessantly* to the Palestinian issue became a sin of omission, as if all other struggles had been drained of any intrinsic value they might have had. In a way, this was a rehashed version of mistakes New Leftists made, in all their Marxist-Leninist glory, when they relegated every struggle except Third World/Black liberation to secondary status. Unlike the '60s radicals, though, we had no pretense of following scientific analyses of society, so our harsh prioritizing was informal, seldom

articulated or even acknowledged—a result of group dynamics as well as of political definitions in which action really meant *_re_action*. When you are always reacting rather than initiating, you naturally run a higher risk of mirroring the state's priorities rather than your heart's desire.

Our readiness to “link” struggles by subjugating all to one is still quite prevalent. The Social Justice tents' protests that gripped Israel in the summer of 2011—a local version of the Occupy movement, largely inspired by the Arab spring—saw anarchists participating with the sole purpose of imposing the Palestinian cause, willfully blind to the myriad of other opportunities the protests opened up for us. As tens of thousands of ordinary people marched through the heart of Tel Aviv's White City behind a wide, tall banner that read “When the Government Is against the People, The People Are against the Government,” anarchists reduced themselves to waving anti-occupation placards from the sidelines, conveying a message that nothing, not even genuine popular protest, has any worth unless it carries the West Bank and the Gaza Strip coiled around it like constrictor snakes. In the 2012 Social Justice protests, it looked like more of the same as far as anarchists were concerned.

Attempts to identify this tendency—and, by inference, to recognize AAtW as a manifestation of sublimated political prioritizing—usually end up locked in emotional and personalized systems of representation, which at best reveal only half a picture. It is true that those were very demanding times for us personally, and that the Palestinian popular struggle, then as now, involves highly charged situations that burn intensely enough to dim out most everything else if you let them. But there is also a more abstract, notional component at play.

Anarchists often use theoretical frameworks that present everything as interwoven and equally important to avoid putting their priorities on the table regarding struggles and issues. Being rather averse to both formulas *and* hierarchies—not to mention formulaic hierarchies!—we tend to favor integrative, circumfluent political outlooks, in which a constant reaffirmation of common grounds trumps that ill-famed need of revolutionaries to identify a key issue, a chief contradiction. And yet, our deliberate vagueness notwithstanding, we *all* prioritize struggles—its our self-awareness of this that varies. Like hypocrisy, the only sure way to avoid this is to sit at home and do nothing. The important question, then, is not *whether* we prioritize struggles, but what criteria, if any, we employ in doing so. Geography? History? Morality? Mass psychology? And how do we conceptualize such prioritizing—by definition a process of stratification—to make it compatible with concrete, everyday anarchist politics?

It seems to me that the wrong way to do this is by inertia, by default, by letting the chips fall where they may. Like structures, priorities are most danger-

ous when they are invisible. And this leads us back to the example of Anarchists Against the Wall.

AAtW owes the strength of its tactical diction—its very existence, I would say—to the unspoken notion that the Palestinian issue crystallizes the general crisis in Israeli society, that this national conflict is the prime seismic fault line. As far as I know and can remember, there have been no concerted efforts on our part to step back and question the reasoning that anointed this notion as self-evident truth. Through which eyes does this issue crystallize the general crisis? From what perspective is this issue the prime seismic fault line?

We know that politicians, their media, and the phantasm they call “the Mainstream” all adhere to this notion, and work diligently to enforce it, although their criteria is hardly ever discussed in factual terms. It couldn’t possibly be based on the number of fatalities, for example, when over a thousand Israelis die every year from pollution, and car accidents have claimed more lives throughout the country’s existence than all of its wars combined; it couldn’t possibly be the amount of suffering inflicted—inasmuch as that can be meaningfully quantified—when almost 200,000 Israeli women are battered yearly. No. The question we should be asking instead is plain, and yet cuts deep: *cui bono*? Who benefits most from our accepting an armed, territorial conflict along ethnic, religious and national lines as the center of political gravity?

I assume most anarchists don’t need the answer spelled out for them.

And still, somehow, the political prioritizing embodied in AAtW remains essentially the same as the prioritizing propagated by the Israeli state, its media, and their ilk. Very few Israeli anarchists in the last decade have rejected these priorities in favor of economic, feminist, migrant, environmental, gender, or nonhuman struggles, to name but a few divergent perspectives.

In the adrenaline rush to *become an opposition*, we should have taken greater care not to lose the characteristics that also make us a well-rounded alternative, as these two do not always correlate. In many ways, circumstances and a lack of analysis have caused AAtW to become an inverted or cracked-glass reflection of the state’s point of view, instead of reflecting something altogether different. This helps explain why it feels so natural for us to cooperate with even the most racist, misogynist, homophobic, intolerant religious zealots the Palestinian resistance has to offer. The philosopher was right in cautioning us about gazing into the abyss, and emphasizing that everything unconditional is a pathology—solidarity included.

I readily acknowledge that all this discussion of prioritizing struggles—in fact, even prioritizing struggles in and of itself—serves only to remind us what matters *least* in life: political reductionism. Also, since the need to prioritize issues exists

in inverse proportion to the number of activists and resources available, anarchists in countries with wider movements may not relate to these problems.

What role has the rhetoric of nonviolence played in Anarchists Against the Wall, and in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict generally?

Nonviolence rhetoric works, or rather *doesn't* work, the same the world over, so I'm guessing there's no need to elaborate on the universal flaws of the whole thing. In the case of Palestinian resistance and AAtW, however, there is a twist to the story: it is no longer simply a matter of nonviolence versus violence, but of nonviolence rhetoric employed, mainly by external forces, to muddy the waters and obfuscate the violent aspect of Palestinian popular resistance—not only its legitimacy or scope or accomplishments, but its very existence, its definition as such.

But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Although this question presumably refers to nonviolence as a tactical approach, rather than its absolutist, theosophical variety—i.e., pacifism—let's start with the second meaning, just to clarify things.

It will probably not be the shock of your life to learn that pacifists have played no significant role in this region since about the time of the Essenes. On the Palestinian side, Muslims who advocate pacifism come exclusively from a very specific Islamic context: the Sufi, or mystical, tradition (yes, like Hakim Bey). However, Sufism was pushed to the margins of Palestinian society long ago by Salafist/Wahhabi Islam, and during the 20th century its scope of influence here has been reduced to a few forgotten highland tombs and hilltop shrines dotting the landscape. Some Palestinian Christians, who make up about 3% of those living under occupation, have also been known to preach pacifism, but always heavily diluted with—and ultimately overshadowed by—tactical argumentation. More on that later.

As for the Israeli side, the last three decades, beginning with the 1982 Lebanon War, have seen hundreds of people jailed for refusing to perform military duty (standard sentence is 28 days), but to my knowledge, only *one person* has claimed bona fide pacifism as his motivation; somewhat unexpectedly, it was the nephew of prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Generally speaking, conscientious objectors—or “Refusniks” as they're known here—belong to two distinct categories. The more conventional ones, characterized by the organiza-

tions Yesh Gvul and Courage to Refuse, are older reserve combat soldiers and officers who advocate a selective refusal to serve in the occupied territories, yet strongly identify with and perpetuate militarist and nationalist discourses; indeed, they believe it is precisely this ardent patriotism that legitimizes their critical voice. Younger activists, characterized by the organizations New Profile and Shministim (literally “twelve-graders”), view *any* military position within the army as directly or indirectly perpetuating the occupation, and refuse out of a more radical and comprehensive critique of dominant Zionist narratives, militarism, and male-chauvinism. New Profile is explicitly feminist, in stark contrast to both Yesh Gvul and Courage to Refuse, the membership of which is practically all male. Neither category, however, has significant pacifist traits.

Conscientious and pacifist moralisms aside, things get a little more complicated when it comes to nonviolence as a strategy. Again, I’ll start with the Palestinian side.

Like most other national liberation struggles, Palestinians have used a wide range of nonviolent tactics against the encroaching Zionist movement—even prior to Israel’s statehood, while everyone was still under Ottoman and British rule. For example, the 1930s saw local commerce grind to a halt for six whole months due to general strikes against the British mandatory government.

The first Intifada encompassed some of the most memorable examples of Palestinian nonviolence. For example, in the Palestinian Christian city of Beit Sa-hour, a tax revolt against Israeli occupation led to the entire city being placed under siege for 44 days, ending with Israeli soldiers going in and “confiscating” (looting) two million dollars in goods from businesses. But even the second Intifada, an overwhelmingly more violent and militarized uprising remembered for its Qassam rockets and suicide bombings, still saw plenty of boycotts, pickets, vigils, hunger strikes, mass demonstrations, protests, and marches—many following the nearly daily funeral processions—all examples of nonviolent resistance which went largely undetected in Israel and the West. Undetected, that is, until the popular struggle against the Apartheid Wall began taking shape and welcoming Western as well as Israeli activists into its fold.

However, and I can’t stress enough how crucial this is to understand, Palestinians’ definition of nonviolence—often framed within the wider and uniquely Palestinian concept of *sumoud* (steadfast perseverance)—bears only a fleeting resemblance to the nonviolence fetishized by the liberal “Peace Police” types you encounter in the West. The two definitions are as removed from each other as the everyday realities the two groups live and struggle in.

First and foremost, Palestinian nonviolence is completely devoid of “moral high ground” and “stooping to their level” parlance, which for Western anar-

chists should be a breath of fresh air. Simply put, it is not as concerned with spit-shining its own reflection as it is with achieving its goals. Also, it has been decades since Palestinians have let concerns of negative media coverage lead them by the nose. Past experience has shown quite clearly that sticking to non-violent resistance did not gain them the support of the so-called international community—even *before* War on Terror hysteria.

The famed “Arab Gandhi,” Mubarak Awad, a Christian Palestinian-American and the main advocate of Palestinian nonviolent resistance, founded the Palestinian Center for the Study of Nonviolence in the ’80s. He was quite honest about this being a practical rather than Gandhian matter (although he is still politically savvy enough to conflate the two occasionally):

“For the Palestinians who are living in the West Bank and Gaza during this period, the most effective strategy is one of non-violence. This does not [...] constitute a rejection of the concept of armed struggle. Simply put, the thesis is that during this particular historical period, and with regard only to the 1.3 million Palestinians living under the Israeli occupation, non-violence is the most effective method to obstruct the policy of ‘Judaization.’”

His disciple, Nafez Assaily, who operates his own small nonviolence project in the city of Hebron today, makes this equally clear. Referring to Yasser Arafat’s speech at the UN—delivered while holding a gun in one hand and an olive branch in the other—Assaily points out that “neither hand cancels the other.”

It has been my experience that, in the Palestinian political vocabulary, “non-violent” means “unarmed”—and even then, only if by *arms* you mean guns, not bottles filled with petrol and motor oil. Nonviolence is used as a term to describe broad popular resistance, actions everyone can participate in, as opposed to armed struggle, which is conducted by the few.

Note how, unlike liberals, the Palestinian nonviolence advocates I quoted do not juxtapose nonviolence with, say, rock throwing or window breaking, but only with picking up the gun. In his open letter to Chris Hedges, David Graeber mentions meeting an Egyptian activist who, speaking of last year’s popular uprising, expressed a similar point of view: “Of course we were non-violent. No one ever used firearms, or anything like that. We never did anything more militant than throwing rocks!”

If I may reach back once more to the American New Left for comparison, the ’60s antiwar organization SDS defined itself as “not violent, but not nonviolent,” which although a bit tongue-twisting is much more accurate, not to mention honest. This definition is what Palestinians have in mind when they speak of a nonviolent struggle, especially in the context of the ongoing demonstrations against the Apartheid Wall.

Palestinians, like almost everybody except the domineering doctrinaires of nonviolence in the West, do not consider self-defense a form of violence; this broadens their definition of nonviolence significantly. And since they happen to live under military occupation, any damage they inflict on the occupiers—soldiers, bureaucrats, cops, machinery operators, border police or settlers—is essentially a form of self-defense. This is true even according to the conservative standards of international law—specifically, the 1960 UN Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples—not that we should give a damn about legalities. This broader, fluid definition might make it harder for the zealots of nonviolence to maintain their rigid and moralistic demarcations, but for the rest of us it's simply an affirmation of common sense. For all their stupidity, US Libertarians have a clearer, self-explanatory term for this: the Non-Aggression Principle. You don't start shit, but you reserve the right to respond.

Lastly, if one steps back to examine nonviolence rhetoric in Palestine from a wider socio-political perspective, it seems clear that a significant part of the reason it did not—indeed, *could not*—take root in the resistance movement lies in that fact that the concept was introduced to Palestine in the '80s. At that time, the Palestinian Liberation Organization—whose charter specifically listed armed struggle as the *sole* means of liberation—reigned supreme as the unchallenged representative. It was a time before religious organizations began speaking in nationalist terminology and entered the political arena, before Hamas turned Islam into a liberation theology. Proposing a means of resistance outside the PLO was taboo, tantamount to directly challenging the organization's authority—especially from an outsider, as Mubarak Awad was. Indeed, the PLO leadership exiled in Tunis at the time viewed nonviolence rhetoric as a potential threat to its power, and was extremely hostile to it. During the Beit Sahour tax revolt, for instance, the PLO denied logistical help to the participants, actively discouraged other communities from joining in, and refused financial aid to those persecuted for tax resistance—while offering it to the families of those killed or wounded in violent clashes.

Of course, violence was the dominant motif of Palestinian resistance for its obvious symbolic value as well: the empowerment it offers a people who—much like Israeli Jews!—carry within their national identity a strong historical sense of being powerless, almost ontological victims. Come to think of it, this might be true for many anarchists, too. The PLO's largest faction, Fatah, included in its internal charter a telling affirmation that “armed struggle is a strategy and not a tactic” (Article 19), and one of its first pamphlets was a translation of Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, which famously glorifies violence as restoring self-

respect, freeing “the natives” from their inferiority complex, and even serving to “unite the people.” All of this somewhat blurred the line between means and ends, rendering it highly unlikely that nonviolence rhetoric could gain a strong foothold in Palestinian resistance, even in its purest tactical form.

On the Israeli side, Anarchists Against the Wall and the International Solidarity Movement have been among the chief propagators of the myth of Palestinian nonviolence, knowing full well that to Western audiences—practically our *only* audience—the term is understood in a contextually different and significantly narrower way. This is accomplished not so much by outright lying as by omission, by silently taking advantage of ambiguity, or by clinging to technicalities, real or imagined but insignificant either way: for instance, the claim that the *shebab* slinging rocks are not technically part of the protest marches or demonstrations. This claim is disingenuous. First, because the popular committees that organize the protests in each village do, in fact, cooperate and coordinate crowd movement with the stone-throwing youth—perhaps not in advance, but in real time; perhaps not always, but often enough. Second, because the supposed categorical distinction between “stone-throwers” and “protesters” exists only in theory, without a trace of it on the ground. And finally, because even if it did exist, both groups form equal parts of the broader phenomenon we call the Palestinian popular struggle.

There are other reasons why the myth of Palestinian nonviolence is being disseminated ad nauseum, becoming truth by virtue of repetition. Where the more liberal or mainstream elements in Palestinian society are concerned, for example, it is largely a question of cold hard cash: 30% of the Palestinian GDP comes from foreign aid. Naturally, the various foundations, charities, and governments funding the hundreds of Palestinian NGOs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are unanimous in their insistence on nonviolent politics, along with its accompanying rhetoric. With Palestinian NGOs pushing this line, activists in the West are all too happy to toe it, and facts be damned.

Among Israeli radicals, including AAtW, you’d be surprised how often everything boils down to unresolved liberal complexes, and a tendency to simplify things for politically correct crowds using banal syllogisms: a) good guys are not violent, b) Palestinians are the good guys in this conflict, c) ergo, the Palestinian popular struggle is nonviolent. To put it differently, since Israeli soldiers inhale oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide, Palestinians are expected to do the opposite.

Today, as hundreds, perhaps thousands of videos from ten years of weekly demonstrations are available online for anyone to watch, it is truly a testament to the power of cognitive dissonance that people can go on referring to this struggle as “nonviolent.” But politically speaking, the most worrying aspect of all this

is the delegitimization of Palestinian violent resistance, inherent in the perpetuation of the nonviolence myth. Rather than fool ourselves that Palestinians should be or are responding nonviolently to the violence inflicted on them, we should admit, embrace, and *wholeheartedly support* Palestinian violence against the far greater violence of Israeli Apartheid.

Furthermore, the prevalence of nonviolence rhetoric in reference to Palestinian resistance contrasts greatly with the general acceptance among radicals, even among the liberal left, of violence from Zapatista communities defending themselves against paramilitaries—or Naxalites in the forests of India resisting infrastructure companies with landmines and automatic rifles—or MEND rebels in the Niger Delta fighting Western corporations by attacking oil wells and pipelines, killing workers, security guards, and soldiers in the process. It makes no sense at all. As some Palestinians themselves have asked recently, I strongly urge everyone to once and for all get treated for their nonviolence obsession wherever Palestinian resistance is concerned.

Now, regarding AAtW's *own* tactics, as Jewish citizens and unequal partners in the joint struggle, nonviolence has always been our default setting. Since the very beginning we have been careful to play a strictly supportive role, never leading or taking initiatives—which is usually what the vanguardist tendencies latent in political violence end up pushing one towards. Initially, we had decided not to adopt nonviolence as a collective guideline, leaving the question open for each individual to answer as she saw fit. After the first couple of years, however, certain key activists began pressing for a formal resolution in favor of nonviolence, and this actually became the primary bone of contention in AAtW.

On the surface, the reasons for this demand were purely practical, and they make sense. The first reason is that nonviolence enables us to offer a safer network for less militant activists, as well as mainstream members of the left, who wish to attend demonstrations in West Bank villages. This is an important function, since prior to the joint struggle many Israelis had not seen the reality of the occupation and the Apartheid Wall up close with their own eyes. The nonviolence tagline has contributed considerably to hundreds of Israelis witnessing the brutality of the Israeli army firsthand, something which AAtW would have never achieved without being perceived as nonviolent. The second reason has to do with our ability as Jewish citizens to prevent soldiers from using certain types of lethal force, for example live ammunition, by our presence in Palestinian demonstrations, given that soldiers have separate and stricter rules of engagement for Jews than they do for Palestinians. Basically, some within AAtW felt that if Israeli participants were to engage actively in violence against soldiers, it would gradu-

ally erode our ability to use our Jewish privilege as a deterrent, until eventually we lost it altogether.

These are valid concerns, yet I cannot help but feel that, not too far below the tactical surface, lie the usual liberal sensibilities and anxieties vis-à-vis the use of violence; and also that, beneath the political rationale for utilizing our Jewish privilege, lies an all-too-common personal fear of giving up one's privilege, period. Furthermore, regarding our role as a sort of "human shield," I think this is flat out wrong: it has been my experience that most soldiers already assume Israeli anarchists throw stones at them alongside Palestinians, or, if not, that they at least support and facilitate the stone-throwing, which is bad enough in their book. Israeli soldiers do not place such high importance on intricate, college-educated ethical distinctions between a person throwing rocks at them and another person standing nearby, defending the first one's right to do so. In other words, a soldier's desire to avoid the legal troubles associated with shooting a Jewish citizen plays a much more significant role in his reluctance to open fire on us than does his impression that Israeli anarchists "don't deserve it." I have no doubt combat soldiers think we deserve it, regardless of whether we actually join stone-throwers or just protect them.

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A Coup d'État in Israel?

The Bitter Harvest of Colonialism

CrimethInc

27 March 2023

On Sunday, March 26, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu fired his defense minister in an attempt to consolidate power over the country, precipitating spontaneous mass demonstrations. On March 27, facing the prospect of a general strike, he agreed to delay his effort to push through a judicial reform that will centralize control in his hands. In return for that concession, he gave his extreme-right minister of internal security—the convicted terrorist Itamar Ben-Gvir—permission to establish a militia under his own authority. In other words, having gained control of the government but not yet of the streets, the reigning far-right coalition is buying time to figure out how to suppress popular unrest while intensifying the persecution of Palestinians.

These are just the latest developments in a struggle that has been escalating for months, pitting various sectors of Israeli society against each other. The outcome will impact everyone, but the Palestinians will suffer most of all, no matter which side comes out on top: if the liberal protest movement wins, the prevailing apartheid regime will be perceived as more legitimate, whereas if Netanyahu and Ben-Gvir win, the situation will become even more deadly and dehumanizing for Palestinians. In the following analysis, our correspondent shows how this crisis has emerged out of a conflict between competing elites and their respective colonial models.

For months now, weekly mass demonstrations have taken place in Tel Aviv and other cities, drawing tens of thousands every Saturday. This is one of the biggest social movements in the history of Israel. The protests began after the inauguration of the most far-right government ever to rule this country; they quickly shifted focus to opposing a judicial reform that would consolidate power in the hands of the government at the expense of the court.

Many protesters see this measure as a coup attempt. One of the most worrying sections of the bill of the proposed reform, called the override clause, will undermine the sacred liberal concept of the separation of powers. Among other things, it would limit the Supreme Court's ability to oppose and repeal laws that the government passes, allow the government to re-enact laws invalidated by the court, and give the government more say in appointing judges. Benjamin Netanyahu's government has already introduced a law limiting the ways a sitting prime minister can be declared unfit for office. But to understand the social dynamics at play here in full, we need to examine the contradictions within contemporary Zionism and identify the competing approaches to managing a settler colonial society. For more context, we'll conclude by reviewing the most recent developments in the Palestinian resistance.

Semantics: Throughout this text, when referring to the geographical region between the Jordanian river and the Mediterranean Sea, we use the word "Palestine."

When referring to the state and aspects of Jewish-Israeli society, we use the word “Israel.”

The Context behind the “Coup”

The current situation in so-called Israel is a story about an increasingly authoritarian government consolidating power, yes—but there is more to it. The process of centralization that began long ago is coming to fruition, alongside a polarization towards fascism. There are local and global reactionary alliances involved, along with a conflict between competing elites, a prime minister desperate to escape corruption allegations, and a settler colonial society that is preparing to move to the next step of apartheid and ethnic cleansing. Without this bigger picture, we cannot understand the proposed reform itself, nor the “threat to Jewish democracy” that it represents, nor why so many people from the mainstream of Israeli society have been taking the streets against it while brandishing Israeli flags.

The bill would expose already marginalized communities to the increasing power of the regime. Subordinating the court system to the government will subject many Palestinians, women, members of the LGBTQ community, migrants and asylum seekers, and others to greater risk. At the same time, the Israeli court system has always been an integral part of the apartheid regime. It has legalized one ethnic cleansing campaign after another. Uprooting Bedouin communities in the Naqab (Negev), evicting families and demolishing houses in East Jerusalem, ongoing attempts to evict and ethnically cleanse the Masafer Yatta area in the West Bank—the court has approved all of these, functioning as a rubber stamp for the regime of Jewish supremacy.

Under Israeli democracy, many communities never had any rights in the first place. Now, many in the middle class are afraid that they will lose their privileges as well. As in many colonial societies throughout history, repression does not remain limited to the initial outgroups, but expands to target more and more people.

In response, we are witnessing one of the biggest social movements in Israel in a decade, since at least the tent protests of 2011. This can be understood as a sort of resurrection of liberal Zionism, which appeared to be on its deathbed just a few weeks ago. Israel has a very strong, street-organized, and class-conscious middle class, which has consolidated itself over the past decade through the “social justice” tent movement of 2011, the various protest movements involving independent workers and small business owners during the COVID-19 lockdowns,

the anti-Netanyahu Balfour demonstrations of 2020, and the current mass movement against the judicial reform. They have power in the streets, but not in parliament, as they consistently lose elections.

From the outside, it might look as if Netanyahu is not very popular. Indeed, he is a controversial and polarizing figure in Israel. But the images of mass protests show only half the picture.

There are many growing undemocratic and anti-liberal populations in Israel, and we're not talking about anarchists here. For example, the ultra-Orthodox Haredi community, with its high birth rate, is predicted to comprise two thirds of the country's population in a few decades. The typical electorate supporting Netanyahu is comprised of Mizrahi/Sephardic working-class people from conservative-leaning peripheral towns—not to mention the fundamentalist fanatics and fascists, pogromists, Kahanists [a far-right organization officially outlawed in Israel as a terrorist group], extreme settlers, and hilltop youth that make up the far-right. The latter are highly organized and capable of perpetrating violence through both institutional and extra-legal means. They hold prominent positions of power, they have the army on their side, they are in charge of the police force, and they are now the third largest party in government. They are making alliances with foreign reactionaries, too.

The chief demand of the protest movement is democracy. For Israelis, since the beginning of Zionism, democracy has always meant *for Jews only*—in other words, ethnocracy. The majority of middle-class Zionists were comfortable with liberal democracy for themselves and apartheid for everyone else. But now that their own privileges are on the line, this is one step too far.

Such a development is not unprecedented. In every step of their development, liberal democracies have always excluded entire populations under their control, selectively determining who gets to be included in the “nation.” The French declaration of human rights denied the humanity of women; the constitution of the United States was written by slave owners. In the name of spreading freedom and democracy, the United States government had absolutely no problem supporting brutal dictatorships in South America and other parts of the world.

Democracies sometimes expand to include previously excluded demographics, often after an insurrection, and always as part of a project of assimilation and erasure. As the Invisible Committee put it in “To Our Friends,”

Democracy is the truth of all the forms of government. The identity of the governing and the governed is the limit where the flock becomes a collective shepherd and the shepherd dissolves into his

flock, where freedom coincides with obedience, the population with the sovereign. The collapsing of governing and governed into each other is government in its pure state, with no more form or limit.

In this view, it is not surprising that various old-fashioned dictatorships in Spain, Greece, and South America had to “transition to democracy” in order to continue ruling with public legitimacy. In Israel, by contrast, years of neoliberalism and ethnocracy have created a situation in which democracy can only contract.

Some communists, anarchists, and radical leftists are participating in the protests against Netanyahu’s attempt to consolidate power, forming anti-apartheid blocs within these massive demonstrations. The idea is to expand the scope of democracy to include everyone, not just Jews, and to bring the issue of the occupation of Palestine to the heart of the struggle. These are good intentions, though they are easily marginalized as a tiny bloc of Palestinian flags inside a massive sea of Israeli flags. The organizers of the mass demonstrations and the vast majority of the participants seem to view these blocs as an annoyance or distraction. Most protestors don’t seem to grasp the connection to the wider themes of the movement, accusing the solidarity activists of hijacking the protests for unrelated and “provocative” issues. Both sides claim to be fighting for democracy—but they are basing their arguments on radically different ideas of what democracy means.

When we contemplate the massive shift towards the far right that has taken place in many parts of the West, we must bear in mind that this has occurred as a consequence of the neoliberal assault on the working class and the failure of the left to provide solutions, both of which have made it possible for fascists to gain momentum. Likewise, in societies that experienced a “socialist past” in which a repressive leftist government attacked working people, this has also driven many people to the right. And when, on top of those things, we add settler-colonialism to the equation—a situation in which the entire population, proletariat and bourgeois alike, benefits from a regime that imposes ethnic supremacy—well, you can imagine that this complicates things even further.

This is the context in which the government is presenting its judicial reform as a populist project in the Israeli class war between the Ashkenazi elite and the Mizrahim. Class is heavily tied to ethnicity and geography in Israel. The original pioneer Zionists, the European settlers that came to Middle East, had a specific vision in mind: a white, liberal, secular colony, a “villa in the jungle.” Seventy-five years later, they are watching their utopia disintegrate, becoming like many other states in the region.

As mentioned, many in Israeli society don't hold the idea of liberal democracy dear—some for fascist and reactionary reasons, others simply because liberal democracy never had anything to offer them in the first place. Many in peripheral towns still remember that the kidnapping of Jewish Yemenite children, the repression of the sailor's strike in Haifa, and the crushing of the revolts of Wadi Salib and the Black Panthers all took place under the regime of the democratic socialist party Mapai (*Mifletet Poalei Eretz Yisrael*, the Workers Party of the Land of Israel). Ethiopian Jews remember police killings and decades of racism and discrimination. And Palestinians... well, it's obvious, but we'll get to that below.

But what's happening here is not simply a grassroots revolt against democracy. One of the chief organizations behind this coup attempt is Kohelet Policy Forum, a far-right research institute and think tank with considerable influence on government policy and financial backing from foreign tycoons. An investigation conducted by Israeli media channel 12 concluded that the forum had a major role in proposing the current reform as well as the Nation-state bill of 2018, and in promoting MK Betzael Smotrich—the far-right politician who is the leader of the Religious Zionist political list—to the Civil Administration. Describing their ambitions to “secure Israel's future as the nation-state of the Jewish people, to strengthen representative democracy, and to broaden individual liberty and free-market principles in Israel,” Kohelet Policy Forum has promoted various nationalist and neoliberal causes, including the privatization of health and education, the abolition of welfare institutions, opposition to raising the minimum wage, the annexation of the West Bank, the appointment of conservative judges, and the deportation of asylum seekers. During COVID-19, they opposed providing aid to small businesses and increasing the number of hospital beds.

Moshe Kopel, the chairman of this forum, lives in Efrat, a Jewish settlement in the West Bank. Kohelet forum receives tens of millions of shekels annually, mainly from two sources: Jeff Yass, a conservative and right-“libertarian” American billionaire who also donates to the Republican party, and his partner, billionaire Arthur Dantchik. It is nothing new for far-right “research institutes” backed by foreign, neoliberal, and reactionary donors to seek to initiate a coup in order to shape a country's politics according to their own interests.

This is the context in which we should understand right-wing populist discourse to the effect that the leftist hegemony's last remaining stronghold is the judiciary system, which must be superseded by “the people.”

Rhetoric about a leftist deep state controlling the court and the media against the sovereignty of the people will sound familiar to comrades from other parts of the world, who may be surprised that Zionists would import what are usually

anti-Semitic talking points. This is less unusual when we consider how white nationalists and other far-right groups have embraced Israel.

Israeli flags are regularly displayed at English Defense League protests in the UK and by supporters of Trump and Bolsonaro in the Americas. They were displayed during the Capitol riot in Washington, DC on January 6, 2021 and the Brazilian Congress riots on January 8, 2023. Zionists maintain ties with Evangelical Christians in the US, just as Netanyahu maintains relations with far-right reactionary parties such as the regimes of Viktor Orbán in Hungary and Giorgia Meloni in Italy. Likewise, Israel signed the Abraham Accords with authoritarian dictatorships throughout the region, including Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Sudan. In the words of Noam Chomsky, we are facing a reactionary international in which Israel plays a huge role.

Within Israel, the alliance between reactionary working-class populations and self-seeking billionaires is driving Netanyahu's power grab, while middle-class protesters seek to defend their privileges without taking the oppressed and excluded into consideration.

It wasn't always this way. Previous proletarian movements in Israel made the connection between their own situation and Zionist colonialism and expressed solidarity with Palestinians. In 1959, the Wadi Salib revolt in Haifa demanded an end to military rule over Palestinians, among other things. In the 1970s, the Black Panthers in Jerusalem made connections with Palestinians, understanding the Mizrahi and Palestinian struggles as interrelated. They went as far as meeting with the Palestinian Liberation Organization.

For many in Israel, the election of 1977 was a turning point, drawing the working class into the clutches of the right wing. That year, the right-wing Likud party won for the first time, breaking the hegemony of the Mapai party.

It might be a good idea to try to resurrect the spirit of the mid-20th century movements, although hardly anything remains of that legacy. Nationalist emotions have proven to be a stronger drive; a liberal "identity politics" of shallow representation has replaced an emancipatory, potentially post-colonial vision for the region. Alfredo Bonanno claimed that an intifada starting from the Israeli people might be the ideal solution. Probably so—but currently, we are headed rapidly in the opposite direction.

Zionism is at a crossroads, however. What will come of the recent political awakening remains to be seen.

A Field Guide to Ethnic Cleansing

An effective settler-colonial project of ethnic cleansing is never easy to implement, and Zionists have always disagreed among themselves regarding how best to pursue it. The strategies and tactics of the ongoing *Nakba* [“the disaster,” i.e., the displacement, dispossession, and killing of Palestinians starting from 1948] have changed over time; the regime adapts, but the drive toward ethnic cleansing persists. There have been many attempts at ethnic cleansing since 1948, chiefly via military rule and assimilation.

When you can’t drive people off their land and deport them, sometimes the closest thing to that is to do the opposite: imprison them on their land, turn their villages and towns into ghettos, monitor and restrict their movement, surround them with checkpoints and walls, and prevent mixing between the settlers and the natives at any cost. For the remainder, a project of assimilation is necessary. Thus, many Palestinians became “Israeli Arabs,” stripped of their identity and roots.

The messianic settler movement complicated this approach, because they insisted on settling in the territories occupied in 1967, among the indigenous Palestinians, against the wishes of the government at that time. The ruling parties of Israel opposed the idea of Jewish settlers in the West Bank: if you want to build a prison, it makes no sense for the prison guards to live with the prisoners. This is why Ariel Sharon evicted Jewish settlers from the Gaza Strip in 2005 in order to turn it into a closed prison and bomb the population from time to time.

And this is where the *other* faction of Zionism enters the picture. To put it in simple terms, the liberal Zionist current takes an approach to the indigenous population that is strictly based in control and assimilation: the cultural erasure of collective identity, especially of material ties to place and to traditional lifestyles, and an open-air prison model for ethnic cleansing. Right-wing Zionism, on the other hand, takes the annihilation approach, seeking to replace the indigenous population. Just like mainstream liberal Zionism, they have developed an arsenal of tactics and strategies via which to pursue that goal, and various factions have emerged grouped around each of these. One of these factions, the messianic Kahanist settlers, is coming to power now because Netanyahu desperately needs them in his coalition in order to form a government. They have different ideas for population control and ethnic cleansing than David Ben-Gurion and the pioneer Zionists had in mind, and they are much less committed to the framework of liberal democracy.

Very little has been written in academic research about far-right Zionism, as it was considered a fringe phenomenon until quite recently. But things are chang-

ing rapidly. In the dialectic between Judaism and democracy, Netanyahu was happy to keep the line blurred, just as Israeli society in general has done so far. But the settlers in Netanyahu's coalition government have precipitated a conflict, strongly prioritizing their notion of Judaism over democracy. The Religious Zionist list, a far-right political group consisting of the Kahanist *Otzma Yehudit* (Jewish Power) party and a few other fundamentalist religious and far-right parties, is now the third biggest party in the new government, and Itamar Ben-Gvir, a veteran Kahanist activist, has become the new minister of internal security, which gives him authority over the police.

This has already affected the policing of the current protest movement. Ben-Gvir instructed the police to use force to suppress any attempt to block roads or "create anarchy." During one of the "resistance days" in Tel Aviv, police threw stun grenades at protesters and injured some of them—quite a rare occurrence in Tel Aviv. Many alleged that the order to do so came directly from Ben-Gvir. Also, reportedly, the Tel Aviv district police commander was fired after Ben-Gvir got angry with the police for being too soft on demonstrators and not following his order to prevent them from blocking the roads. Ben-Gvir later denied that this was the reason for the firing, but the timing was suspicious.

The basic idea of religious Zionism is that the establishment of the state of Israel represents the beginning of the redemption process—a messianic process happening before our eyes, God's consent to return from exile. The state isn't perfect, as it is liberal and secular, but religious Zionists are willing to use it a tool in pursuit of their goal: a theocratic monarchy under Halakha law. The fate of Palestinians in this future government is clear: temporary residence without rights or else forced transfer.³⁷

³⁷ For a summary of the various contemporary fundamentalist and ultra-nationalist currents within religious Zionism, readers can consult the following resources. "The Decision Plan," a manifesto published in 2017 by Betzalel Smotrich, leader of the Religious Zionist political list at the Knesset and the current Minister of Finance, details how the "Israeli-Palestinian conflict" should be solved: complete annexation the West Bank and Gaza Strip and more Jewish settlements. For the Palestinians, he offers two alternatives: they could live as residents without citizenship (for now) or immigrate to other countries (forced transfer). In a speech in Mercaz HaRav yeshiva in Jerusalem in 2019, he declared that the "law of Torah should return to Israel." Other influential advocates of religious Zionism include the authors of *Torat Hamelekh*, which details the fate of "gentiles" under Jewish law, and Yitzchak Ginsburgh, an influential rabbi, called by many the leader of the hilltop youth movement, who views Smotrich and the Religious Zionists party as too moderate and advocates the reinstitution of Jewish monarchy in the Land of Israel. (Some of his followers want him to be the king.) He also advocates the forceful transfer of Palestinians and the rebuilding of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem in place of Al-Aqsa Mosque—an act that would drag the region into a religious war. For him, the coup is good, as it weakens the ju-

Far-right religious Zionist currents have taken root in many Jewish settlements in the West Bank. Their militias work in full coordination with the Israel Defense Forces to carry out acts of terror and pogroms against the Palestinian population, such as the latest pogrom in Huwara (described below). Betzael Smotrich, the leader of their electoral list, has already declared that “Huwara should be erased.” Many people in “mixed” cities are anxiously awaiting the next round of pogroms and the return of lynch mobs, this time with the Kahanists as the new bosses of the police.

The realization of their vision would unleash the worst hell on earth that this piece of land has seen in centuries. Zionism has created a monster that it is not sure it can handle. Whether the ambitions of this faction are realistic or not is not the main issue. What we’re dealing with here is a dedicated counterrevolutionary movement that has attained power by exploiting the contradictions of Israeli society and the political crisis of the past couple years—including the fact that Israel has had five elections in less than four years and that, facing corruption allegations, Netanyahu was desperate to establish a coalition government.

The links between Kohelet Policy Forum and the Religious Zionist politicians within the current government are clear. They see MK Smotrich as their gateway to the government.

So, to sum up: far-right religious fundamentalist currents funded by US conservatives and legitimized by neoliberal ideology are promoting a coup to weaken the judiciary system of a settler colonial entity established by ethnic cleansing. This would give the government a stronger grip on power, enabling it to advance to the next stage of authoritarianism.

It’s hard to predict what’s ahead, but we haven’t seen the worst of it yet. We’re headed toward hard times, especially when we consider how climate change will impact this region over the next couple of decades, exacerbating ethnic conflicts and wars over resources. We should prepare for the possibility that future intifadas will be driven by basic needs such as access to drinkable water and food.

Let this be a lesson to everyone. We are paying dearly for the failures of liberal democracy and the left, as well as for the decision to establish a colonial nation-state to try to solve the problems of oppressed people. Already, in 1938, Emma Goldman declared,

“I have for many years opposed Zionism as the dream of capitalist Jewry the world over for a Jewish State with all its trimmings, such

diciary system, but it’s not enough: the plan is to abolish it completely, engage in open war with the existing state, and prepare for a theocratic revolution like the one that took place in Iran.

as Government, laws, police, militarism and the rest. In other words, a Jewish State machinery to protect the privileges of the few against the many.”

We should have listened back then, when there was still time. Now, we need to brace ourselves. The coming crisis cannot be averted. It is the context in which we will fight the struggles to come.

Meanwhile, on the Other Side of the Wall

So many things had happened in Palestine since last we wrote from this part of the world. As of now, at least 80 Palestinians have been killed since the beginning of 2023. It's hard to keep up with all the raids, massacres, and pogroms. I will focus on the massacre in Nablus as one of many Israeli counter-insurgency techniques against the Lion's Den, which represents a new phase of resistance among the youth of the West Bank, and on the pogrom in Huwara, which was a turning point for many people.

On February 22, IDF soldiers raided the town of Nablus, killing eleven people in the course of an operation intended to target militants from the Lion's Den. This was part of “Wave Breaker,” a counter-insurgency military operation begun in 2022 to crush the new wave of Palestinian militancy. The Lion's Den is the name of a Palestinian guerilla group based in Nablus that represents a new phenomenon in Palestinian militancy. Unaffiliated with the longstanding traditional factions, and therefore beyond the control of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Fatah, Popular Front, or other groups, their decentralized, non-hierarchical, and unpredictable structure has proved to be a challenge for the IDF. Along with similar groups like Balata Battalion and Jenin Brigade, they represent locally-based cells of resistance that utilize guerilla warfare against nearby military checkpoints and settlements and protect their towns and villages against invasions.

This stems from a wider phenomenon of Palestinian youths who, starting from the knife intifada of 2015, have been gradually taking matters into their own hands, acting independently of the old factions, parties, and organizations. This complicates things for Israel, which has been forced to innovate in its repressive mechanisms as well. In 2022, a “security official” remarked:

“The shooters leave Nablus spontaneously, without a clear organizational structure or hierarchy... There are no orders from top to

bottom as we know terrorist infrastructures. They don't have an organized infrastructure, this challenges us. If we had the option, we would act against them individually, but it is almost impossible."

This justifies raids, sieges, and collective terror targeting entire populations. In the age of formal organization, it was enough to target specific individuals, but now, anyone is a suspect, which allows for more indiscriminate violence.

On the evening of February 26, dozens of settlers with Molotov cocktails marched toward the villages Huwara and Zaa'tara in the Nablus area of the West Bank. They began setting fire to homes, vehicles, and shops. This took place under the watchful eyes of IDF soldiers, who did nothing to stop the rioters.

It's a common practice for IDF soldiers to allow settler pogromists to terrorize the local population, only taking action against Palestinians who try to defend themselves. For local Palestinians, there's hardly a distinction between "military" and "civilian," as they work together with full coordination and represent the same force.

Over 70 homes were set on fire, with families still inside at least nine of them. They were evacuated as their homes burned to the ground, along with hundreds of cars, shops, ambulances, and livestock. By the end of the pogrom, hundreds had been injured. One Palestinian died: Sameh Al-Aqtash from the village of Zaatara.

It's unclear how things will play out from here, but we can expect repression to intensify. At the same time, people will continue developing innovative new ways of resisting, adapting to circumstances and moving forward. The effect of the authoritarian power grab on this already dire situation has yet to be seen.

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“A Nuclear Superpower and a Dispossessed People”

**An Anarchist from Jaffa on the Escalation in Palestine and
Israeli Repression**

CrimethInc.

October 8, 2023

On October 7, Hamas, the ruling party in the Gaza Strip, breached the siege wall surrounding them to carry out a series of attacks. The Israeli government has responded with a full military operation. While both sides have targeted civilians as well as soldiers, these events can only be understood in the context of decades of repression and ethnic cleansing.

At the time, we were just wrapping up an interview with Jonathan Pollak, an anarchist from Jaffa—a Palestinian town that was majority-Arabic until recently. A longtime participant in Anarchists Against the Wall and other anti-colonial solidarity efforts, Jonathan is currently facing a prison sentence for protest activity earlier this year. In the following interview, he describes how he sees the current escalation. He also describes how the Israeli judicial system structurally oppresses Palestinians, explains how to support Palestinian prisoners, and evaluates the effectiveness of solidarity efforts over the years.

For more background on the situation in Israel and Palestine, you could start with our history of contemporary Israeli anarchism, our report on the uprising in Haifa in 2021, and our coverage of the political conflict within Israeli society earlier this year.

We hope to share the perspectives of anti-authoritarians in Gaza as soon as we succeed in communicating with them. In offering this space to a person who grew up in Israeli society, we don't mean to center the perspective and personhood of Israeli citizens, but rather to show that the situation cannot be reduced to a binary ethnic conflict, just as we have done in publishing the perspectives of Russian anarchists on the invasion of Ukraine.

Escalating Hostilities

On Saturday, October 7, as we were preparing to publish this interview, Hamas carried out a coordinated wave of attacks. The Israeli government has responded with a full military assault. How do you see these events from where you are situated?

This is an event of historic proportions in terms of Palestinian resistance to Israeli colonialism, which is still ongoing. It is too early to say what exactly will happen next, so I'd rather speak more to the general context of the situation than give an analysis of a developing affair while the details are still unclear. While it is already clear that some acts that are far outside the boundaries of resistance took place during the attack, anything I could say right now would be outdated in just a few hours.

What is certain beyond any doubt, however, is that horrible days are upon us.

The very short version of this specific story is that Hamas forces managed to break through the siege that Israel brutally imposes on the Gaza Strip, and to enter, or in some cases completely take over, Israeli settlements on the other side of the wall. The death toll on the Israeli side is in the many hundreds, and a lot of the images appearing in the media are gruesome and shocking, especially on social media. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Some of the terms I use in this context might be confusing to people who somewhat follow Palestine, and are used to the term Israeli settlements being reserved to those in the areas Israel occupied in 1967. However, I feel that it is necessary to understand Israel as a whole as a settler-colonial project, and Zionism as a colonial movement for Jewish supremacy. We would be remiss to ignore the long history of Israeli ethnic cleansing, which resulted in the 1948 ethnic cleansing of Palestinians by Israel, known as the Nakba. The Gaza Strip today, a fraction of the pre-1948 Gaza district of Palestine, is home to refugees from 94 villages and towns in the historic district that were completely depopulated. Today, 80% of the Strip's residents are refugees, besieged in the world's largest open-air prison. The towns that were taken or attacked by Palestinians at the beginning of the current fighting are some of the depopulated towns that some of these refugees were dispossessed of.

In the international corporate media, the story is mostly portrayed either as a bilateral war between Israel and Gaza, or as one-sided, senseless Palestinian aggression devoid of any context. The missing context, of course, is that the Palestinian people have endured ages of colonial subjugation, especially Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

As I said, the images are gruesome and horrifying. It is impossible not to be affected by them. However, they do not stand on their own. Beyond the aforementioned historical context, in the past two decades, Gaza has been reduced to dust time and again by Israeli air raids and military operations. Now, once again, the bombing has already started—and within the mainstream of Israeli society and its media, there is open discussion of carrying out a genocide in Gaza. If this is not prevented, it could indeed take place.

If we ask Palestinians to not turn to violence, we must not forget the reality they confront. When Palestinians in Gaza marched at the Israeli barrier that imprisons them in 2017-18, they were shot dead in the hundreds. The images circulating now are gruesome and shocking. I don't intend to euphemize, justify, or condone—but in the course of struggle, the path to liberation almost always takes grotesque turns. Although it should be clear that there are some acts of violence which could never, under any circumstances, be justified or considered as acts of resistance.

The African National Congress [one of the chief umbrella organizations that fought against apartheid in South Africa] is often ignorantly celebrated as a reference point by those who seek to argue that violence has no role in struggle. But after the establishment of its military wing, the MK [*uMkhonto we Sizwe*, “Spear of the Nation”], the ANC never renounced violence. Nelson Mandela [a member of the ANC and co-founder of the MK] refused to do so even after decades of imprisonment. In 1985, the then president of the ANC, Oliver Tambo, told the Los Angeles Times,

“In the past, we were saying the ANC will not deliberately take innocent life, but now, looking at what is happening in South Africa, it is difficult to say civilians are not going to die.”

The context of struggle here is between a nuclear military superpower and a dispossessed people. Colonialism does not relent. Colonialism will not step back of its own accord, not even if you ask nicely. As outsiders, we must consider that decolonialism is a noble cause, but the path to achieve it is often ugly and tainted by violence. In the absence of any realistic alternative to achieve liberation, people are often pushed into carrying out unjustifiable acts; this is a fundamental reality of the disparity of power. Even if, at some turns, the struggle takes specific turns we cannot condone or will not stand behind, we must always stand in support of liberation. To demand that the oppressed always act in the purest of ways is to demand they remain forever in servitude.

The Court Case

To back up a bit—Jonathan, you’re in the middle of a court case at the hands of the Israeli government, accused of throwing rocks during a protest in the West Bank. Can you explain the context in which you were arrested?

I was arrested in Beita, a town near the city of Nablus in the West Bank.

Beita has a long tradition of resistance to Israeli colonialism. It was a hub of resistance during the First Intifada (1987-1993). In early 1988, some 20 men from Beita and neighboring Huwara were rounded up by the Israeli army after being identified by the Shin Bet, Israel’s infamous secret police, as being involved in stone-throwing incidents. They were bound with zip-tie handcuffs and had their bones smashed by soldiers using rocks and batons. The soldiers were enacting the direct order of then Minister of Defense Itzhak Rabin, who was on public record calling for a policy of “breaking their arms and legs.”

Later that year, Beita was the site of one of the Intifada's defining incidents, when a group of Israeli settler youth, led by settler extremist Romam Aldube, raided the town under the guise of holding a Passover field trip through it. After Aldube shot dead a resident of the village in the olive groves surrounding the town, the group continued into Beita itself, where they were met by locals who came out to defend themselves. The settlers were eventually disarmed by the people there, but not before settler gunfire killed two more Palestinians as well as a 13-year-old settler girl, who was mistakenly shot by Aldube himself during the confrontation.

In the aftermath of the incident, there were widespread calls within Israeli society to "wipe Beita off the map." In retaliation, and despite the details of the incident already being clear to the military through operational debriefings, the Israeli army destroyed fifteen houses in the village and arrested all male residents, later deporting six of them to Jordan.

In recent years, Beita has been the site of constant contention with the Israeli army and settlers trying to establish settlements on stolen land belonging to the town. The protest I was arrested at, on January 27, was part of a local uprising that began in May 2021, following the establishment of an Israeli colony in the Jabel (Mount) Sabih area on the outskirts of the town. During these demonstrations, eleven people have been killed by Israeli fire, some of them by sniper fire. Thousands have been seriously injured and hundreds have been arrested. The uprising has managed to force an evacuation of the settlers, but only temporarily and with a promise from the government that they will be allowed to return at some point. After the settlers' removal, the place was used as a military base; recently, settlers returned to occupy the houses erected there with government support.

I was arrested when an Israeli Border Police force (a paramilitary unit of the Israeli police) raided the village after a demonstration. At the police station, I heard two of the officers who arrested me coordinating their statements; they then charged me with aggravated assault of police officers (stone throwing), obstruction of police officers, and rioting. I was held in jail for three weeks, then released into house arrest on account of deteriorated health.

You've demanded to be tried in a military rather than civilian court, the way that Palestinians are. Can you explain the significance of this demand?

I am obviously not a fan of the state, any state. But in so-called democracies, the notion of the legitimacy of state violence—which is the foundation of the legal and law enforcement systems—stems from a false ethos of justice and from the misguided notion that these systems represent the collective interests of those who are subject to its authority.

A unique mechanism of Israeli apartheid, one that didn't exist even in South Africa's apartheid system, is that in the West Bank, there are two parallel legal systems in place: one for Palestinians and one for Jewish settlers. When accused of identical offenses—even if they took place in exactly the same location, at the same time, and under the same exact circumstances—I will be prosecuted and tried in Israel's criminal legal system, while my Palestinian comrades will face the Israeli state's system of military law, which reflects the reality of a full-on military dictatorship. To apprehend Palestinians, the government will send its armed forces, which will often detain them in the middle of the night, violently, at gunpoint. It will take up to 96 hours before they see a judge (24 hours for me), and even when they finally do, that judge will be a soldier in uniform, just like the prosecutor. They will be tried according to Israel's draconian military law, likely be denied bail, and their sentence will be handed down after conviction in a system in which not even one person out of 400 is acquitted.

This dual legal system is often referred to as one of the prime examples of the Israeli brand of apartheid. It is such a glaring manifestation of apartheid that even some soft Zionists can't ignore it, yet they don't recognize it as something fundamental to Zionism as a settler-colonial movement, as they focus only on the 1967 occupation and Israel's control over the West Bank and Gaza. You often hear people say the system is bad, but isn't racist; that the distinction is made based on citizenship. That claim is false. There is a 20% Palestinian minority of Palestinians who live in the areas that were occupied by Israel in 1948 and have Israeli citizenship (unlike Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, who live under Israeli control as subjects without citizenship). A scarcely-known fact about the military courts is that even the Palestinians who do have Israeli citizenship are sometimes tried in West Bank military courts. The truth of the matter is simple: I was indicted before the magistrates' court because the state considers me Jewish. Had I been a Palestinian with Israeli citizenship, I'd likely stand trial in front of a military court. The system operates on ethnic and religious lines.

The laws themselves are also different, and military law is in fact not legislation but rather an assortment of decrees issued by the military commander of the area. One such decree, Order 101, forbids any assembly of ten or more people that is of political nature (for example, a group lunch at which politics is discussed), even when people assemble on private property. This is an offense punishable by up to ten years in prison. Similarly, any political organizing and association can be outlawed, and frequently is.

I see anarchism as an ideology—or rather, a movement—of struggle. I generally believe that activism shouldn't be moralistic (as in, self-indulgent and paternalistic), but rather geared towards effecting change. In and of itself, there's

nothing positive about wasting time in jail instead of trying to do useful stuff on the outside. The guiding principle behind my demand to move my trial to a military court was to shine light on a system very few are aware of, and, at the same time, to attempt to undermine it. We made a pretty strong legal argument, considering the confines of Israeli law, but the court just ignored it based on a made-up technicality—it was some pretty impressive legal juggling. My decision to refuse to recognize the court's legitimacy after my motion was denied was also part of my strategy.

There's also a more fundamental reason why I refuse to cooperate with the court and comply with the proceedings, which stems from my understanding of power and my own personal experience with both the legal and prison systems. These systems are rigged so that one is always pleading, always waiting, always at the mercy of power, devoid of any real agency.

Noncooperation turns this entire system of control on its head. It enables you to reclaim power and agency in a situation in which you're not meant to have any. There's certainly a price to pay, and that must be considered every time, according to the circumstances. I'm not advocating this as a general strategy when dealing with the legal system, but I've found it to be extremely empowering.

My chances of being acquitted and avoiding a prison sentence were nonexistent to begin with, so there wasn't much to lose.

It's not the first time you are facing a prison sentence, right?

Nope... I think it's maybe the sixth, but I'm not a hundred percent sure. However, my Palestinian comrades go in and out of prison all the time, and it's very hard to imagine a life without the threat of imprisonment, given the circumstances we live in. If anything, I am lucky (or privileged) in how little time I've done over the past twenty-something years of activism. This, too, is an expression of Israeli apartheid.

You mentioned that you were released from jail earlier this year because of ill health. Can you describe the conditions in the various facilities you have done time in?

Like the legal system, incarceration is also segregated. There are distinct wards and prisons for Palestinian political prisoners (Israel calls them "security prisoners") and everyone else. The conditions are much harsher for political prisoners, with much more limited visits, no access to phones, and other restrictions. However, there is a lot more organizing and a sense of solidarity, even resistance at times. Despite the fact that I'm being tried on political charges for which Palestinians are classified as "security prisoners," and despite having asked to be held with my comrades, I've always been classified as a "regular" inmate.

There are three distinct legal stages of incarceration in the Israeli system: arrest prior to being indicted, arrest following an indictment, and imprisonment following a conviction. Arrest prior to being indicted is the stage with the worst conditions, in which access to the outside world is most limited. At that stage, phone communication and access to TV or radio are forbidden, as well as purchasing items in the commissary. No books or reading material are allowed either, other than the Bible or the Quran. Legally, you are entitled to at least an hour of yard time a day, but it's rare that you get even a few minutes. Some of these things gradually get better once you're indicted or convicted, depending on which jail or prison you find yourself in, which ward.

Physical conditions vary a lot. The number of people in a cell can be anywhere between two and twenty; I have done time on both ends of this scale. I generally prefer having as much privacy as possible, but that really depends on who your cellmates are. Being stuck in a cell with only one other person can be a pretty heavy social burden, especially for someone like me who isn't the best at making conversation.

Drugs and addiction are also an issue, and there are a lot of them going around. Painkillers, opiates, opioid agonists, street drugs, you name it. But they are never in steady supply or enough, so you are often stuck in a cell with a bunch of addicts who go back and forth between forcibly kicking a habit without treatment and scoring and getting high. There are always fights over the little there is. Non-smoking inmates are technically entitled to be held in non-smoking cells, but that's only in theory. In reality, the only smoke-free cell I have ever been held in was a solitary cell. I wasn't even allowed a smoke-free cell when I came down with acute bronchitis.

The most prevalent forms of inmate violence other than beatings are shivving (cigarette filters that have been burnt and pressed are widespread and readily available) and the splashing of boiling water mixed with sugar.

I've been vegan for almost 30 years now. I have type 1 diabetes as well as gluten intolerance (celiac disease); I also have epilepsy caused by being shot in the head with a tear gas projectile at a demo. That makes food a constant struggle in jail, as I basically can't eat anything that was prepared in the prison's kitchen. It usually takes between a week or two until some food is available and even longer to get everything that I need and am entitled to. In that meantime, my diet basically consists of cucumbers and, when lucky, some carrots.

During my latest stint in jail, I lost about 12 kilograms (26 pounds) in three weeks—about 15 percent of my body weight. I came down with acute bronchitis that caused my blood glucose to climb to life-threatening levels.

I was lucky to be bailed into house arrest, mostly due to my health. That's a luck that Palestinians don't have. It was an experience that left me with some self-doubt about how to manage the legal-political strategy of the case, and maybe even a bit broken. It took me a while to recuperate physically, but even longer to get back to myself mentally and emotionally. I had to make decisions about how to handle the case; none of the options were good, and I wasn't in a good place to make them. In the end, I realized that I was facing a binary choice: either I would have to renege on the deal I made with myself as a teenager when I discovered the mirror world of veganarchism, realizing how skewed and fucked up this world is, or I would have to make good on it, and... you know, carry on. And really, that's a pretty easy choice, right? Almost no choice at all.

Are you facing any other charges?

Besides the aforementioned charges, there are also a few open cases—accusations that I haven't yet been indicted for yet, but still might be. Most notably, "incitement to violence and terror" due to an article I published when I was imprisoned in 2020, calling on people to support and join Palestinian resistance to Israeli colonialism.

Are you receiving support from groups in Israeli society, in Palestine, internationally? What can people do to support you and others organizing there?

I have my support circles within the anarchist community and among Palestinians. I think the most valuable thing for people to do at the moment is to support campaigns promoting boycotts, divestment, and sanctions on Israel. There's quite a lot of it going around, its relatively effective and should be fairly easy to get involved in.

As for supporting me, I feel that supporting the struggle and Palestinian prisoners in general is the best way to also support me personally.

There are currently over 5000 Palestinian detainees in Israeli jails and prisons. About a quarter of those held in Israeli prisons are what Israel calls "administrative detainees," who can be held indefinitely with no charge or trial, and on "secret evidence."

It is estimated the one of every five Palestinian men living under Israeli military rule had been incarcerated by Israel at least once.

The organization that best supports Palestinian prisoners is the Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association³⁸: a Palestinian non-governmental civil institution that works to support Palestinian political prisoners held in Israeli and Palestinian prisons. Established in 1991 by a

³⁸ Addameer is Arabic for conscience.

group of activists interested in human rights, the center offers free legal aid to political prisoners, advocates their rights at the national and international level, and works to end torture and other violations of prisoners' rights through monitoring, legal procedures, and solidarity campaigns.

Addameer is one of six prominent Palestinian civil society organizations that Israel designated as terrorist organizations without due process in 2021 based on "secret evidence." They are doing crucial work in support of Palestinian political prisoners in both Israeli and Palestinian Authority detention and it is vital to support them.

Samidoun is an international network of organizers and activists working to build solidarity with Palestinian prisoners in their struggle for freedom. They work to raise awareness and provide resources about Palestinian political prisoners, their conditions, their demands, and their struggles for freedom for themselves, their fellow prisoners, and their homeland. Samidoun also works to organize local and international campaigns to make political change and advocate for Palestinian prisoners' rights and freedoms.

You can follow updates on my case here thanks to my local support group. It is probably still a few months away, but once I'm back in prison, it would be nice to receive letters. The easiest way to do that would be by sending an email to the email address that was used the last time I was in jail, support.jonathan@proton.me, and it'll be passed on to me. I'll do my best to reply, though my best is pretty limited, as postal stamps are in short supply. As always when writing to prisoners, it's important to remember that all correspondence is monitored.

The Background

You helped found Anarchists Against the Wall, a group that received quite a bit of international recognition in the early 2000s. What has come of that project? And what does the anarchist movement in Israel look like today?

I don't really like presenting it as "helping to found" AAtW, mostly because I feel it is a mischaracterization of how that group—indeed most direct-action groups—began. There wasn't a particular moment. At the beginning of the millennium, the Second Intifada was at its height, and we were a small group of people joining Palestinian resistance and doing direct action. Things gained momentum and coalesced, but we never "founded" a group. Even the name wasn't really an intentional choice. We used to send press releases under a different name every time. It was pure chance that this was the name we used on the day

the army shot one of us with live ammunition. In the media frenzy that followed, we made use of our notoriety and stuck with the name.

Twenty years later, the AAtW project is defunct, but I think there are lessons be learned from it, both negative and positive. Akin to the way it came about, AAtW didn't disappear at a particular moment; it withered away. Anarchists live within the society they are fighting against and are not immune to its ailments. Power dynamics always make for an uphill battle, and I think, towards the end, the water was just too muddied. We are talking about a fairly small group of people whose political bond was largely forged over personal kinship and trust. Another important component I can point to in the disbanding of AAtW was the decline in Palestinian popular resistance in the late 2010s.

After I had already left, the group collapsed over fundamental disagreements on issues of violence and nonviolence. The history of contemporary anarchism in Israel published by CrimethInc. in 2013 tells that side of the story pretty well in my opinion, though I am in disagreement with some of the other issues addressed in the text.

Anarchists are still involved in resisting Zionism and Israeli colonialism. True to its "origins," the anarchist movement in Israel also remains very entrenched in animal rights. People in the movement are involved in supporting refugees and undocumented people, cultural and countercultural efforts, radical education, and so on.

However, while anarchists are a presence whenever radical activism arises, my sense is that a distinct anarchist movement does not exist at the moment—perhaps due to the lack of a strong anarchist tradition here.

From this vantage point, what can you say that Anarchists Against the Wall accomplished? What lessons—or at least hypotheses—would you pass on to anarchists elsewhere on the basis of your experiences?

I think that because of the relatively high exposure AAtW received, people tend to make more of it than it actually was. In the early days, it was not much more than a small group of very dedicated people, an extended affinity group really. It eventually grew a bit bigger, with a few dozen people composing its core activist base and perhaps a couple hundred more gravitating around it sporadically.

In my eyes, AAtW's most important trait was the shedding of false national allegiances and even identities, in favor of crossing sides to directly join the struggle of Palestinians fighting Israeli colonialism. In a cohesive and militaristic society like Israel, that was no small departure from common left-wing traditions. Not groundbreaking perhaps, but extraordinary. Our goal was to recognize our place of privilege, use it, and turn it on its head in our relationship with Pales-

tinian resistance. Not to come in as white saviors, but rather, as a resource. The principle of joining the Palestinian struggle and following Palestinian guidance was entrenched in every aspect of the group's activity.

I think that viewing ourselves as allies participating in the struggle rather than as supporters from within the context of Israeli society was AAtW's most important contribution and had the most long-lasting effect, also outside its immediate circle.

As an initially small and tight-knit group, it was not necessary to articulate many issues in the beginning. Certain things were very clear to most people involved, while they were very much taboo in Israeli politics, even within its more radical fringes—for example, our attitude towards violence, our place in the struggle, our antagonist position vis-à-vis Israeli society. This became more diluted and maybe confused as the group grew. AAtW was, so to speak, the only act in town when it came to directly supporting Palestinian popular resistance in the West Bank in those days, which meant that, over time, people joined the group who shared some of the basic principles but weren't necessarily completely consistent with the original political direction. In retrospect, starting out as a small, homogenous, "action first" group, we did not have the tools or the perspective to handle what was about to come.

I'm pretty certain that a strict party line isn't the answer, but I do see the differences that arose on issues like militancy and an Israeli vs. anti-Israeli perspective as the main catalyst for my personal departure from the group. Perhaps it is a lesson on organizing in general, showing how the age-old anarchist affinity group structure is the best way to allow larger-scale organizing while retaining autonomy and diversity without forcing a stifling political compromise. Obviously, there is no silver bullet, and some of the issues AAtW faced after I left were unrelated, but I do feel this might be a relevant lesson to learn.

How has the new government shifted the context in Israeli society and Palestine as a whole? How can the new legislation limiting the Supreme Court's powers affect the situation, both for you personally and for political activists in general? [Note that this question and the following answer were both composed before the events of October 7.]

The current government is one of Israel's worst and most dangerous ever—and that's a high bar to meet. It is flagrantly expressing and executing policies of ethnic cleansing. The threats it poses are vast indeed, but the most significant threat is perhaps the least unique to it: the fact that this government is an authentic representation of *all* Israeli politics' persistent race further and further into the extreme right. The central point of contention within Israeli society, and the one getting most attention internationally, is the government's assault on

the judiciary—but that is an aesthetic rift, veiled as a struggle for democracy. In truth, this is an internal dispute over how to best manage and maintain Jewish supremacy, which enjoys near wall-to-wall support within Israeli society, also among so-called liberals.

The specific changes that the current coalition seeks to enforce will probably render the courts weaker and slightly less liberal, but the courts have never been defenders of our rights, let alone Palestinian rights, nor inhibitors of government policies. Not even a little. The Israeli judiciary is and always has been a fundamental cornerstone of Israeli colonialism between the river and the sea; it has been essential in enabling Zionist policies and providing the system around it with a reputable liberal legal guise. Israel depends on its ability to portray and market itself as a so-called vibrant democracy. A weaker judiciary might carry some harm, but I believe the prospect of a perceived victory by the protest movement against it poses an even greater danger to the overall struggle against colonialism and apartheid.

The protest movement is dominated by an amalgamation of military reservists, former senior members of Israel's notorious secret police, the Shin Bet [Israel's internal security service], economic liberals, and various other Zionist and nationalistic groups. There are some more radical elements involved, but their role and influence are abysmal. The Israeli flag is made up of Jewish symbols, and is an emblem of Jewish exclusiveness and supremacy, and it is no coincidence that it is the protest movement's most prominent symbol. These groups are wedded to the idea of Israel being a democracy, and to the idea that Jewish supremacy does not contradict this. By and large, this is also the most prevalent sentiment among the masses participating in the protests. Any victory of that movement will be used to strengthen the misguided and dangerous notion that Israeli democracy has prevailed, wrongly suggesting that there was an Israeli democracy to begin with.

Have anarchists played any role in the protests?

The question of whether to participate in the protests has divided local anarchists. While many feel alienated, some anarchists have been involved in the "Radical Bloc," which, as the name suggests, is a loose coalition of radicals participating in the protests. In my understanding, they see themselves more as counter-protesters within the main events.

While I respect the choice to try to mobilize within Israeli society and the effort put into it, I still respectfully believe it is misguided under the current circumstances. The general protest movement is so huge—and so overwhelmingly rooted in the notion that Israel is a democracy needing to be saved—that it will suck in, coopt, or wash out any divergent trends within it. For the reasons

explained above, I believe that the current movement is perhaps the greatest threat to the struggle against Israeli colonialism since the Oslo Accords, and that Israel is likely to use it to recover its international standing in a similar way to how the Accords were used to recover from the First Intifada of the early 1990s. At that time, in the end, all that happened was to entrench domination over Palestinians and intensify their dispossession.

Back in the 1990s, the Israeli extreme right, which shortsightedly saw the Oslo Accords as a defeatist compromise, was opposed to them and massively took to the streets. We, too, opposed the Accords—because it was clear, in real time, how they would be used by Israel for its own rehabilitation, and, even worse, to eradicate the Palestinian uprising. At no point, however, did we consider joining the massive right-wing demonstrations aiming to thwart the execution of the Accords. I believe the situation today is somewhat similar. Perhaps a more familiar example would be that many Nazis and fascists oppose globalization. Would anyone even imagine joining hands with them?

However, my discomfort with having any part with the faux-democracy protests runs deeper. I feel that in a settler-colonial situation like the one in Palestine, our role is not, and should not be, that of moderates within the settler society. We must reject this society, its point of view, its internal politics altogether. We must understand that the power disparity means that change cannot come from within Israeli society. Our role is to weaken it, to create splits, to sow division, to resist outright. In a time of contention, we must not try to find our way into Israeli society, but away from it and into the struggle against it.

From the outside, the whole region looks like a powder keg ready to explode. What would it take for something positive to develop? What gives you hope?

I would rather not trade in hope, because like all trade, it's a spectacle of deception. I grew up in the animal liberation movement of the mid- and late 1990s, during the original Green Scare. I remember reading a letter that Free (Jeff Luers) sent from prison in some zine, maybe a year or two after his sentencing, which had a lasting impact on me. It's been a long time and I can't track it down now even with the internet supposedly making the rarest of documents available at our fingertips, so I'm sure I'm a bit off, but—sentenced to over twenty years in prison, Free brought up the Warsaw Ghetto rebellion as an example of how hope or the prospect of success isn't a criterion for struggle and resistance. That hit home back then, and still does now.

The future cannot be foretold. A good friend who was involved in the underground resistance to the apartheid regime in South Africa told me that the late 1980s were the darkest time. [President Pieter Willem] Botha was in power, the

US was still strongly backing white South Africa as an important anti-Soviet bastion, and the end of apartheid was not even remotely in sight. And then the USSR fell and the geopolitical situation dramatically changed, basically overnight. At first, everyone thought that was the end because the Soviets were the ANC's most important backers. But a less obvious side effect was that South Africa's pro-West apartheid government was no longer very important in the post-Cold War era; the fact that there was a strong movement in place to capitalize on these geopolitical changes was what brought about political change and the (imperfect) fall of apartheid.

The moral of the story is to organize and build movements of resistance even when everything seems lost. My view of anarchism isn't utopian. In my eyes, every victory, every success, must be immediately perceived as a failure, as a power structure to struggle against and take down. They say perfect is the enemy of good, but that's only because they lack any imagination and good is never good enough. Imperfection is a constant, but we just keep on fighting, turning victory into defeat into struggle at every turn.

Appendix: Jonathan Pollak's Sentencing Statement

Ten demonstrators were shot dead by the Israeli soldiers in the West Bank village of Beita near Nablus since demonstrations there started in May 2021. On January 27 this year, I was arrested by Israeli Border Police officers as I was making my way home after a demonstration in the village against Israeli colonialism and the theft of village lands for the sake of establishing a new Jewish-only settlement. I was then indicted for stone-throwing, and am now standing before this court to enter my plea on these charges. The case is based solely on the false testimonies of three of the Border Police officers who detained me. The police refused to conduct a meaningful investigation beyond the Border Police testimonies, including into my explicit report that I heard the Border Police officers coordinate their testimonies with one another. Unlike the police, which couldn't be bothered, I do have evidence disproving the officers' testimonies, showing how they are riddled with lies. Under normal conditions, this would be a trial I'd be happy to let run its full course.

The circumstances, however, are far from normal. This case, unusually, takes place after the defendant—me—filed for the venue to be changed from an Israeli criminal court to the much more draconian military courts system, where Palestinians are tried for the similar offences. I demanded to be tried in the military courts because it is there that my Palestinian comrades, who are regularly ar-

rested at demonstrations like the one I was detained in, are tried and sentenced to harsh punishment on scant and often fabricated evidence. Not surprisingly, the prosecution objected to this motion and the court ruled against it. The state prosecutor's poor (and not entirely accurate) reasoning was that my center of life is not in the West Bank. However, Israeli settlers who live and work in the West Bank are also not indicted in military courts, as a matter of policy. Where is their "center of life"? The court's main argument for rejecting my motion was that the offenses I am charged with are not classified as security offenses.

I am no expert in law and do not have the tools—nor do I find it important—to assess the legality of the court's decision. But one thing is beyond doubt: Palestinians, and not only those living directly under the military dictatorship Israel operates in the West Bank, are tried in the thousands in Israel's military courts for identical or similar charges. I am only spared such fate because the state considers me to be both a citizen and a member of the ruling Jewish religion. My friend Tareq Barghouth—a Palestinian resident of Jerusalem and a former member of the Israeli Bar—was tried, convicted, and sentenced by an Israeli soldier in uniform at a military court in the West Bank. Meanwhile, Amiram Ben Uliel, a resident of an Israeli settlement outpost in the West Bank and the murderer of the Dawabsheh family, who was convicted of much more serious terrorism offenses, was tried in a civilian criminal court in Jerusalem.

Just two months ago, Israeli settlers shot Qussai Ma'atan dead in the West Bank village of Burqa. Two settlers were arrested on suspicion of murder. At the same time, some residents of Burqa were also arrested for much lesser suspicions of participating in the confrontations that ensued after the settlers invaded their village. Several hearings took place in the settlers' case, which was presided over in an Israeli civilian criminal court, before even a single hearing took place in the Palestinians' case, which took place in military court. The reason for that is that Palestinians must only be presented before a court after 96 hours—four times the period afforded by the Israeli penal code.

This discriminatory policy may indeed be considered legal by the standards of Israeli law, but in essence, at its core, it is a distinct expression of Israel's apartheid regime between the river and the sea.

But law is not justice. South African apartheid was protected by local law at the time, as were French colonialism in Algeria, Rhodesian white supremacy, and countless other defeated colonial regimes that were clearly unjust. Law, in fact, is quite often designed to be the opposite of justice.

So self-evident and undeniable is the injustice of the status quo that even the former head of Israel's notorious Mossad, Tamir Pardo, was forced to recently

acknowledge that “In a territory where two people are judged under two legal systems, that is an apartheid state.”

This case, despite what a reading of the indictment might lead one to think, does not revolve around rioting or the obstruction and assault of police officers, but rather around the repression and incrimination of the resistance to Israeli colonialism and its apartheid regime. My response to the charges and facts described in the indictment is irrelevant. Since the very manner in which this trial is conducted is an expression of Israeli apartheid, cooperation would be complicity. For over twenty years I have devoted my time to fight Israel’s colonial rule, and I am unwilling and unable to cooperate with it now, even if my decision means being put behind bars again.

Therefore, despite having no intention to admit to something I did not do, I will not question the state’s witnesses, call any on my behalf or testify myself; I will not challenge the prosecution’s so-called evidence, nor will I provide any disproving evidence of my own. Israeli colonialism and its apartheid regime are illegitimate at their core. This court is illegitimate. The proceedings in this case, which supplement other proceedings taking place in the parallel and illegitimate military court, whose *raison d’être* is the suppression of resistance, are all illegitimate. The only reasonable response to this indictment, to this reality, is the struggle for liberty and liberation. No voice is louder than the voice of the uprising!

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The Revolt in Haifa

An Eyewitness Report

CrimethInc.

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During the last month, a popular uprising has sprung up across the land in Palestine and refugee communities abroad. It broke out in Jerusalem, spread to Palestinian villages, towns and neighborhoods in “48 Palestine” (i.e., so-called Israel), and eventually the West Bank, Gaza, refugee camps in nearby countries, and Israeli consulates everywhere. For the first time in decades, the Palestinians showed that not only do they still exist, they are unified and willing to resist, despite all of Israel’s attempts to divide them and crush their spirit. The first days of the revolt were led by the Palestinians of 48, those in the territories occupied in 1948. They sometimes also called “Israeli Arabs” and hold Israeli citizenship. The protests were held in many Arab and mixed cities across so-called Israel; I’ll talk especially about Haifa, the city where I live and witness the events as they unfold.

This article will be divided into a few parts. It’s crucial for me to give some background on the current situation, as well as some history of 48 Palestinians and the resistance so far to Israeli apartheid and occupation. I can only give a quick summary, I’m not an expert or historian and enough material already exists on the subject. To understand the Palestinian issue, I highly suggest the book *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* by Ilan Pappé, an excellent report on the Nakba of 1948 and how the Zionist state came to be. After the background, I present eyewitness reports on the events in my city, Haifa, and also some other points of resistance, the fascist counter-insurrection, the repression, and other important events occurring during the month. To conclude, I’ll share some thoughts on the current situation. At the end: a field guide to Israeli fascism! Fun stuff! Stick around.

Background

The best place to start talking about 48 Palestine and Palestine in general is the *Nakba* (“catastrophe” in Arabic), in which Zionist occupation militias invaded the land in 1948, destroyed villages, massacred the local population, and caused mass expulsion and displacement, leading to one of the biggest refugee crises in history. About 700,000 people left the land, never able to return. Many of them are still aspiring to return to their or their ancestors’ homeland. Not far away from where I live in Haifa, in a road leading from the Hadar neighborhood to downtown, the attack on Arabic Haifa began. Zionist militants rolled explosive barrels down the road to bomb Arab neighborhoods. The steep geography of the city was to their advantage, as from up in the hills, they could attack the Arab neighborhoods located below.

Only recently, as I started to really learn the untold history of this city, did I find out all the horror stories. In the Zionist indoctrination in school, you are only taught about the brave “liberation wars” Jewish men fought against the terror; sometimes you are even taught that this land was completely empty. I learned about the massacre in the oil refinery factory, that after the Palmah, a Zionist militia, threw a bomb at an Arab worker gathering outside, killing six people and injured 42, the workers stormed the building and killed 39 of their fellow Jewish workers. Haifa was always a working-class city with a strong workers’ solidarity, even in the toughest times, and this aggression damaged severely that relationship. In an act of revenge, Palmah militants invaded nearby villages—Balad al-Sheikh and Hawasa—and massacred more than 60 people. I learned about the bombardment and the Zionist terror in Arab neighborhoods, especially Wadi Salib, Wadi Nisnas, Halisa and the whole downtown area. I learned about how when people gathered in the port to evacuate from the city, Zionist militias on mountain slopes overlooking the crowd bombard the area, causing panic and chaos, in order to make sure that the people leaving wouldn’t have second thoughts about coming back.

About 61,000 Palestinians left the city. Some left temporarily, hoping to come back when the situation had calmed down, only to realize that there were new borders, and they would never be able to return to their homes. The 4000 Palestinians that were able to remain in Haifa despite the ethnic cleansing campaign were concentrated in the Wadi Nisnas neighborhood, a Palestinian neighborhood in Haifa to this day. This ghettoization was necessary to establish the Jewish city.

The absentee property law, one of the first laws of the newly born state, enabled the state to declare the land and homes of the refugees who fled to nearby “hostile” countries to be state property, and many of those neighborhoods were occupied by newly arrived Jewish immigrants—like Wadi Salib in Haifa, which became populated by Moroccan Jews. In the first years of the state, martial law was imposed on the Palestinian population that survived the Nakba. Military rule enabled the state to impose curfews, confiscation of property, demolition of buildings, expulsion of residents, expropriation of land, and restriction of movement. The point was to colonize the land as much as possible, maximizing the Jewish settlements and restricting the Palestinians. Martial law ended in 1966, and a year later, in 1967, Israel occupied the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula. The West Bank and Gaza Strip, unlike the territories occupied in 1948, never officially became part of Israel, and their occupation was supposed to be “temporary” until a future agreement was reached between Israel and a Palestinian leadership. Military rule was established in these

territories, and many Jewish settlements were built, some of them populated by the most extreme racist fringes of the Israeli far right.

The history of resistance amongst 48 Palestinians is characterized by annual commemoration of events signifying moments of Palestinian collective courage and resilience. Other than the Nakba day, commemorated every year in May 15, one such event is Land Day. In March 30, 1976, the Palestinians of Galilee and the Negev rose up against a plan of land expropriation by Israel intended to promote the Judaization of Galilee and steal land from Palestinians. A general strike was announced, and riots occurred across many towns and villages in both 48 and 67 Palestine. The police couldn't handle the events and the army went in. Six protesters were killed, three of them in the town of Sakhnin. Ever since then, the event is commemorated annually with marches and events across Palestine.

Another important sequence in the history of popular resistance is known as the October 2000 events. During the second intifada, the protests that started in Umm al-Fahm spread to many cities across the land, with massive riots and fierce fighting against police forces. In Wadi Arra, Nazareth, Haifa, Jaffa, the Galilee, the Negev, and many other Arab and mixed villages and cities, protesters blocked roads, threw Molotov cocktails and stones, and attacked police stations. That was one of the many times that Palestinians showed unity, with the Palestinians of 48 and 67 fighting together, as one people, despite all the attempts of Israelization and division. But there was also a massive mobilization in reaction. Mobs of Israeli Jews rioted in Jewish and mixed cities, attacking Palestinians and Palestinian businesses. Twelve Palestinians were killed during the events, and one Israeli Jew. Despite investigations, no one was ever punished for the killings, and all the cases against the police officers who were suspected of the killings were closed.

After October 2000, many of the youths in 48 Palestine turned to crime, and weapons began to appear in Arab villages, towns, and neighborhoods. The issue of criminal activity is very painful and destructive in 48 Palestine; it is literally killing the society from the inside. In 2020, 113 Palestinians were killed in gang-related activity; criminal organizations have literally taken over towns and villages. Just a few months ago, there were protests against violence in Arab towns, and some of them were attacked by police. A huge number of weapons are located in Palestinian towns, and it seems that the state is completely happy about it. They will intervene as soon as Jews are threatened and make it into a terrorist situation, but they allow the Arabs to kill each other. Many youths without a future and nowhere to go are turning to crime, and the criminal lifestyle has become some kind of subculture. The issue of weapons will play a big part in the current uprising.

This year, in Jaffa, on April 18, 2021, a rabbi and a manager of a Jewish yeshiva were attacked by local Palestinians. This yeshiva is what's known in Israel as a "Torah nucleus"—these are groups of settlers and right-wing activists, usually from the West Bank, who are coming to Palestinian neighborhoods and mixed cities in order to establish synagogues and yeshivas and build Jewish communities as a colonization and Judaization campaign in the area. It's important to mention that the yeshiva was built in Ajami, one of the last remaining Palestinian neighborhoods in Jaffa. The history of the Palestinians in Jaffa, like anywhere else in Palestine, is a story of dispossession and exclusion, and in Jaffa, this was coupled with gentrification and crime. The media presented the event as a senseless attack against a Jewish rabbi; riots broke out in which local Palestinians attacked the police and defended their neighborhoods.

In order to understand the current explosion, one must understand the importance of Jerusalem to the Palestinian collective consciousness. The city is a massive stronghold of resistance, seen as a place to defend at all costs. Many mass uprisings have broken out in Jerusalem, including the second intifada, which broke out after Ariel Sharon, then the minister of defense, visited the Al-Aqsa compound, which was seen as a serious provocation.

To understand Jerusalem is to understand a big part of the Zionist mentality and the Palestinian resistance. After the occupation in 1948, the city was divided into the western part, under Israeli control, and an eastern part, under Jordanian control. After the occupation of 1967, the city "reunited," and the Palestinians received permanent residency. The "reunification" of Jerusalem is celebrated annually in Israel; the Hebrew date of the occupation is a national holiday, marked by a "flag parade" in which many Israelis march from the city center and right-wing participants enter the Muslim quarter of the old city, waving flags and shouting racist slogans, under full police protection.

Jerusalem is a laboratory for apartheid and settler colonialism. The Palestinian neighborhoods in the eastern part of town are completely neglected. Refugee camps inhabited by those who fled in 1948 and are forbidden to return to their original homes are located near poor Arab neighborhoods and Jewish settlements, surrounded by walls. These are dense, poverty-stricken ghettos; some parts aren't even connected to the sewage system. Construction permits are almost never given to Arabs, so most construction is illegal. In the midst of all this, there are racist Israeli settlers with a clear plan to Judaize East Jerusalem and make it like the West.

The Al-Aqsa compound, or the Temple Mount, is one of the most explosive regions in the world. The mosque, one of the holiest places in Islam, is a stronghold of resistance, a national symbol, and an area of ethnic tension. After Israeli po-

lice decided to put barriers at Bab al'Amud, one of the entrances, and to restrict the number of worshipers to 10,000, riots broke out, with many of the protesters attacking police, setting streets on fire, and damaging security cameras. The barriers were eventually removed. At the same time, a few Palestinians uploaded TikTok videos with a nationalistic character showing them attacking Jews in the city, and far-right mobs were organized to attack Palestinians in the market and the city center. Lehava, a far-right fascist organization, led a racist march from the city center to Bab al'Amud, chanting "Death to Arabs," and were blocked by police near their destination. Riot cops entered Al-Aqsa mosque on May 9 and 10, and in the intense riots that broke out, at least 12 cops and more than 215 people were injured.

In Sheikh Jarrah, a Palestinian neighborhood in East Jerusalem, Israeli settlers have been trying to Judaize the area and evict the Palestinians for more than a decade. Extremist Jewish settlements exist in other Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem, like Silwan and Abu Tor, where they are completely protected by Israeli police and armed thugs. Religious and nationalist settler organizations, backed by wealthy donors from abroad, mainly American Jews, are engaging in legal battles against Palestinian communities and property via the Israeli judicial system.

Sheikh Jarrah is a very old neighborhood in Jerusalem, dating to the 12th century. During the 1950s, while the area was under the control of Jordan, the Jordanian government housed Palestinian refugees there who had fled from the 1948 occupation and Nakba. The current dispute began in 2001, when Israeli settlers broke inside a sealed section of the Al-Kurd family's house and refused to leave, arguing that the house was once owned by Jews. The Jerusalem District Court ruled in their favor. The court ruling was based on an Ottoman-era bill of sale, the authenticity of which was challenged in 2009 on the grounds that the building had only been rented to the Sephardi Community Committee, the Jewish group that allegedly owned the property. Moreover, the Palestinian families and their supporters maintained that the Ottoman documents that Israel's Supreme Court had validated were in fact forgeries. The Al-Kurds were evicted in 2008.

In August 2009, the al-Hanoun and al-Ghawi families were evicted from two homes in Sheikh Jarrah and Jewish families moved in, based on a Supreme Court ruling that the property was owned by Jews. This provoked outrage from all over the world. During 2010, weekly demonstrations were held in the neighborhood by Israeli left-wing activists and local Palestinians. The global reaction and the struggle were able to prevent further evictions until 2017, when another Palestinian family was evicted—the Shamasna family. During the end of 2020 and the beginning of 2021, the Israeli courts ruled that eight families,

roughly 500 people, are to be evicted. The verdict has been appealed, and the legal hearing has been postponed several times due to the riots occurring in the neighborhood and international pressure.

The ground was ripe for insurrection.

Timeline of the Revolt

This timeline will concentrate mainly on events in Haifa, but will mention important events in other cities that were central to the current uprising, including Jerusalem/Al-Quds, Lydd, Akko, Jaffa, and Ramle. Some events will be missing. I'm not a journalist; this might not be perfect, but these are the events as I experienced them. As I'm writing this, the situation has "calmed down," but events are still occurring, Gaza is a living hell, fascists are still attacking people in small groups, and state repression campaigns are ongoing.

May 9

As I approached the German Colony, a big crowd had already gathered to protest the latest invasion of Al-Aqsa and the planned evictions in Sheikh Jarrah. The German Colony is a big neighborhood in the middle of the city, in proximity to Wadi Nisnas, that got its name from being a German Templers settlement during the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century. It became a kind of Bohemian center for many Palestinian youths in the north of Israel, with many restaurants, cafés, and clubs. The main street, which used to be called Carmel Boulevard and is now called "Ben Gurion" Boulevard, leads to the Bahai temple, and the square in the middle of it, known by Palestinians as Ha'asir square, is a regular site for pro-Palestinian demonstrations. The Hirak, which literally means "movement" in Arabic, is a decentralized movement of local cells that resemble the model of affinity groups. Different Hirak groups are active in many towns and coordinate with each other. Hirak Haifa called the people to gather at 8 pm, and a few hundred people answered the call.

As we moved from the square to the road in order to block it, police rushed to the front to make a line in order prevent us from marching. People turned back and started marching to the other side instead, which made the police run to the other side as well, and then people quickly turned again and started marching in the intended direction. The cops eventually made lines on both sides to kettle the demonstrators. The Shabab were clearly visible—the Palestinian youth, known as the more militant resistance. The atmosphere was very tense; people

stood in front of the police line, waving flags and singing songs. Some protesters tried to push through police line and were violently arrested. The situation became even tenser as people started to shout slurs at the police and to give them the finger. Then things became chaotic.

As the stun grenades were fired directly toward the crowd and people ran to take cover, the sounds of bombing could be heard from miles away. The yards of restaurants became a place to take shelter, and stones and empty bottles were thrown at the cops. A trash bin was set on fire. Fifteen people were arrested that day. For me, it was war zone, but it was only a taste of what was to come in the following days.

At the same time, in Nazareth, a similar protest was taking place in front of a police station. Tires were burned to serve as barricades, and clashes with cops led to a few arrests.

May 10

I arrived late at the German Colony that day, when the riot was near its end, but I did see the Shabab taking over Carmel Boulevard, throwing stones and setting burning barricades in nearby streets. Fifteen arrests had already been made. At the same time, I learned that throughout the country, the situation had escalated, beginning to resemble a mass popular uprising.

It was Jerusalem day, the national day celebrating the occupation of the eastern part of town in 1967 and the so-called “reunification” of the city, and the annual flag parade was supposed to march from the city center in the west through the old city in the east, during the riots in Bab al’Amud and Sheikh Jarrah, and the police invasion of Al-Aqsa. The city completely exploded. Hundreds rioted in the Al-Aqsa compound. Lynching attempts took place [in this region, the word “lynching” describes a group of people beating up one person, sometimes killing them, otherwise severely injuring them]. Around 5 pm, Hamas announced from Gaza that Israel had one hour to evict all cops from Al-Aqsa and Sheikh Jarrah. As the hour passed, at 6:02 pm, sirens were heard in Jerusalem, and rockets were fired from Gaza toward the city. Participants in the flag parade ran for cover. The police, in contrast to recent years, announced that entering the old city will be forbidden, and blocked marchers trying to enter.

In response to the shooting, Israel announced a military operation in Gaza, and military airplanes begun to bomb the Gaza Strip, causing mass destruction, killing, and displacement. Hamas in return launched rockets at Israeli cities, chiefly causing damage to buildings, but also a few deaths.

In Lod, also known among Palestinians as Al-Lydd, a historically Palestinian, now mixed city in the center, not far away from Tel Aviv, the situation reached the scale of full-blown ethnic riots. Palestinians set fires to cars, synagogues, municipal buildings, and a military preparatory school. During the riots, a Palestinian was shot dead by a Jewish resident. Riots occurred also outside the hospital. In the nearby Ramle, synagogues and a graveyard were also burned, stores were looted, and stones and fireworks were fired toward cops and random people. While it's very hard to justify some of the actions of the Shabab, and they unfortunately had a clearly nationalistic and religious character, it's important to mention that a lot of the synagogues that were damaged at the beginning were those of the right-wing Torah nucleus cells, with a clear mission to Judaize mixed cities. It's also important to understand the context in the cities of Lydd and Ramle, and how ghettoized the segregated Palestinian communities are there.

Riots also took place in Jaffa, with protesters throwing stones and firing fireworks at police, and all across the north, in Galilee and the Negev. More than 100 people were arrested, and police stations were burned.

May 11

The fascist reaction began. As Jewish and Arab left-wing activists gathered for a non-violent peace demonstration at the UNESCO Square at the German Colony leading to the Bahai Temple, far-right protesters gathered in front of them, shouting "Death to Arabs!" and accusing them of being traitors. Police separated the two groups. Down the street, at Ha'asir square, Palestinians had already gathered and the energy was high. One Shabab youth climbed the pole of a street-light to raise a Palestinian flag. Riot police brought horses and a water cannon to deal with the protesters. The stun grenades, as usual, came out of nowhere, and the neighborhood turned into a war zone.

Some restaurants and businesses in the area opened their doors in solidarity to people fleeing the cops. The Shabab fought bravely against the police that night. Dozens of trash bins were burned, streets were barricaded, and for a few hours, the police lost control. Allenby Street leading to Wadi Nisnas was literally on fire. Wadi Nisnas itself was fully barricaded, and Shabab youth stood on the square leading from the German Colony, guarding against police invasion. It felt like a liberated territory, a temporary autonomous zone, in which the state had to retreat, if only for the night. The tear gas clouds were definitely felt, but people held their ground.

In the main street of the German Colony, the police allowed right-wing fascists to march through, shouting racist slurs, under heavy protection. In the video documenting the incident, cops are shown chasing a demonstrator and violently breaking into a house in a nearby street.

In Lydd, during the funeral of the Palestinian killed the previous day by a Jewish resident, the riots continued, and a cop was injured by a stone thrown at him. More cars and synagogues were damaged, and a few Jewish residents were evacuated in fear of violence. Border patrol entered the city, and there was talk about bringing the army in. A civil emergency was declared, giving more authority to the police and security agencies.

Israeli riot police in Lydd.

Right-wing protesters came to the city. In Ramle, Palestinians burned parts of the local market. At the same time, fascist mobs mobilized to come to the city, with leading figures like Itamar Ben-Gvir and the Kahanist far-right organization Lehava [for an explanation of Kahanism, see the appendix]. The fascists attacked people suspected of being Arabs, lynched an Arab driver, threw stones at Arab cars, and tried to enter a Palestinian neighborhood. In Akko, Palestinians rioted in the old city, burning local businesses and a police station.

May 12

Fascists gathered in Kiryat Eliezer, a mostly Jewish neighborhood near the German Colony, to march to Wadi Nisnas and attack Palestinians. They were there as a part of a nationwide anti-Palestinian mobilization. Far-right Telegram and WhatsApp groups appeared, urging people to bring knuckle-dusters, knives, baseball bats, and other “cold weapons,” and to prepare for battle. A call went out for people to gather in Wadi Nisnas to help defend the neighborhood, and youth gathered at the entrances from the early afternoon. Police blocked the fascists from reaching Wadi Nisnas, but they caused damage to businesses owned by Arabs on their way, attacked Palestinian drivers and passers, damaged cars, threw stones at Arab homes, and shouted racist slurs. The police attacked the people gathered in Wadi Nisnas with tear gas and stun grenades. It was impossible to reach the neighborhood, as I arrived too late and the whole area was completely blocked by riot police. Clashes also erupted at the German Colony, as had become a daily occurrence.

In Bat Yam, a fascist mob that tried to reach Jaffa rioted, smashing the windows of a business owned by an Arab and brutally lynching an Arab driver, which was caught on live television.

In Lydd, a curfew was announced starting at 8 pm; no one was allowed to enter the city or go out of his or her house. Despite this, massive numbers of far-right gangs, some of them settlers from the West Bank, came to the city and were allowed to walk around freely and attack Palestinians. Palestinians who gathered at the local mosque were attacked by riot police, border patrol, and fascists. Gun-fights were reported throughout the night between settlers and Palestinians.

A cop was shot and injured in Ramle. Fascist anti-Arab mobs and attacks also took place in Hadera, Natanya, and some other Jewish cities. Three Israelis were lynched by Palestinians in Akko.

May 13

Groups of Shabab in the German Colony, downtown, Wadi Nisnas, and Hadar threw stones and Molotov cocktails, smashed banks and businesses, erected barricades, fought the police, and damaged streetlight poles, traffic lights, and busses. An elderly Israeli woman was injured from stones thrown at a bus. At the same time, people were now gathering daily at the courthouse to wait for arrestees to be released.

In Lydd, the curfew continued for another night, and street fights between police, Palestinians, and fascist mobs ensued. Settlers burned down an Arab store, while Palestinians burned a truck and a community center. An Israeli was stabbed. Gun fights between Palestinians and settlers were reported. The riots also continued in Ramle.

These were pretty much the main days of the events. During the following days, the riots largely died out. Protests and attacks continued on a smaller scale. Attention was largely directed at rockets flying towards Israeli cities and the massacre in Gaza. I touched on the main events in 48 Palestine, but barely mentioned the Negev and Galilee, which bravely resisted the state as well, the parallel uprising in the West Bank, and protests by Palestinian refugees at Israeli borders in Lebanon and Jordan and embassies and consulates everywhere.

The following days were characterized by heavy repression, conducted by the police and the infamous Shin Bet, the Israeli security agency. Cops raided people's homes, looking for anyone involved in rioting or even in organized protests. They raided the homes of members of Hiraq Haifa and made arrests, as people were thinking about how to commemorate the upcoming Nakba day on May 15.

On Nakba day, a big protest took place in Sakhnin, ending peacefully. The fascist mobs continued as well, but after this point, they all went underground. Some Arab houses in Haifa were marked, causing some residents to leave the

city in fear. For some, this was reminiscent of the practices during the Nakba—causing fear and panic among the indigenous population to make them leave.

May 14

Palestinians were forming autonomous self-defense committees. From a statement released on Facebook by Khulud Khamis, a Palestinian from Haifa:

This morning (Friday 14, May 2021), I woke up to the news that 38 Palestinian youth were arrested during the night in Haifa. Some of them were minors, who were interrogated without parental accompaniment, while others with injuries were denied medical care. Lawyers from Adalah, the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, had been waiting all night to meet with them, but as of that morning, they were denied the opportunity to provide any legal consultation.

These last few days have been almost surreal in Haifa. I have never witnessed anything like this happening in my beloved city. For the second night in a row, about 200 Jewish settler extremists, calling themselves “The Citizens’ Army,” have stormed Palestinian neighborhoods in Haifa. They are armed with bats and other weapons, many of them with military training background, and are highly organized. In the afternoon, small groups are seen entering buildings and marking with a red marker doors belonging to Palestinian residents. They have vandalized dozens of cars, attacked Palestinians in the streets, and attempted to break into the homes of Palestinians. Similar attacks have been carried out in other mixed cities, such as Lydd, Akka, Jerusalem.

Palestinian neighborhood and community representatives met yesterday to discuss protection tactics, because we have seen how the police not only hasn’t intervened to stop these attacks, they have enabled them and backed them. Instead of stopping the settlers’ attacks, the police attacked Palestinian protesters whose only crime was defending their homes.

After the first night, where we witnessed the lack of police action, some Israeli allies met with both the Mayor of Haifa and with the police. They basically told them there is nothing they can do.

We are not protected in our homes, towns, and cities, the violence is only escalating, Gaza is being attacked, children, women, and men are being killed, residents of Sheikh Jarrah are still facing forced expulsion, and the world remains silent, turning a blind eye.

The Israeli media is of course successfully portraying the Palestinian citizens as the instigators and hooligans in this equation, while almost completely ignoring the extremist settlers' attacks. This only plays into the hands of Netanyahu, who has repeatedly failed to form a government following the four elections held during the last year and a half. As the situation stands right now, he has yet again a big chance of forming a government.

Palestinian citizens in Yaffa, Akka, Haifa, Lydd, and other places are forming self-protection committees. Lawyers, physicians, psychologists, and people to patrol our neighborhoods to protect us from the vicious attacks we are witnessing these past few days (my own testimony from what has happened in Haifa is in my previous post.

We are calling for immediate international intervention to stop this madness. We have been left to fend for ourselves, completely unprotected. Act now.

And on a more personal note:

Friends who are speaking up, protesting, taking action, resisting: you are on the right side of justice.

"Friends" who are silent: your silence is deafening.

And don't you dare ask me what you can do or tell me that you feel helpless and there's nothing you can do. There's always something you can do. If you are ignorant of what is happening, educate yourself and start taking action. This is on you. You cannot say I didn't know.

May 18

A general strike was announced in 48 Palestine. In Haifa, during the day, many events were held in Wadi Nisnas to celebrate Palestinian culture, including songs, live shows, drawings and activities for children. At 6 pm, a protest was called in Hadar, on the road leading to Wadi Nisnas. Heavy riot police came prepared. As people begun marching, the police quickly blocked the road, preventing them

from marching. People sang songs and celebrated in the street instead. Despite the tension, the gathering ended peacefully.

In the evening, a Palestinian near the German Colony reported that right-wing racists had marked his building, thrown stones and Molotov cocktails, and shouted racist slurs, then ran away.

In Jerusalem, during a demonstration supporting the general strike, police attacked people in Bab Al'Amud and riots occurred in Sheikh Jarrah.

May 19

In Umm al-Fahm, Mohammad Kiwan, a 17-year-old Palestinian, injured during the protests the previous week, was declared dead. Riots erupted at the entrance to the city.

May 20-23

On **May 21**, a ceasefire was announced between Israel and Hamas, ending twelve days of military operations in Gaza and rocket launchings. During riots in Jerusalem, police once again entered the Al-Aqsa compound, repeating the provocation that had escalated the situation in the first place.

The state initiated an intense oppressive campaign intended to terrorize those dared to resist. About 2000 people were arrested. On the night of **May 23**, Israeli police announced operation “Law and Order,” aiming to arrest 500 people in 48 hours, in addition to approximately 1500 people who had already been arrested. In raids across the land, people were arrested on charges ranging from giving the finger to a cop³⁹ and online posts to and rioting. Arrests still continue to this day.

The Youth Move Forward

The Palestinians feel betrayed and abandoned by the world. People only remember them when there's an ongoing genocidal campaign, and even then, everybody is busy talking about how “complicated” the situation is. I'm not sure if they have anyone to trust, including their own “leadership.”

The Shabab, the youth fighting in the streets, the kids erecting barricades against the police and setting trash bins on fire, are completely alienated from

³⁹ Israeli police are very sensitive.

any form of political force; they work in small informal groups, and many of them don't give a fuck about politics at all. They come from the far edges of Palestinian society in 48, the direct consequence of the Zionist attempt to reduce this society to internal chaos. They are gangsters, drug dealers, outlaws of any kind, youth without a future from the poorest villages, towns, and neighborhoods of 48 Palestine, the lumpenproletariat, and—the most important thing—they are completely uncontrollable. The traditional politics of organizations, political parties, respectable religious leaders, and NGOs means nothing to them.

The new generation in Palestine has nothing left to lose. Even according to Israel's infamous Shin Bet, they really are ungovernable. Whenever a riot or an uprising gets out of control, the authorities and security agencies look for "responsible" adults, respected "community leaders" to pacify the situation. But when you invest so much power in breaking a society from the inside to such an extent, you create an enemy that you can't negotiate with, because he has zero fear of you and nothing to rely on or hope for. There is no going back to normal.

And they are being completely vilified. The media propaganda machine treats them as nothing but criminals, terrorists, savages, bloodthirsty pogromists, and they don't get to have a voice. The riots are presented as nothing more than an outburst of violent anger from some hooligans, with the idea that our police force, intelligence agencies, and prison system will deal with them. It looks as though everybody decided to continue to push them as low as possible, to sweep them under the rug, to treat them as nothing more than monstrous murderers until the next outburst. Zionist apartheid is also a class system, and they hate poor Palestinians the most.

The uprising is also, of course, a form of class warfare, beyond the regular scope of ethnic conflict. I've read somewhere that during the first intifada, in its early days, many of the youth who revolted in Gaza and beyond weren't very political and most of the attacks were directed against richer Palestinians. This goes way back to the great Arab revolt of 1936, when many of the attacks involved the Falahis, the peasant population of Palestine, acting against the urban elite. This dimension of the class struggle within Palestinian society is always erased from history, in favor of a more simplified ethnic conflict of Arabs against Jews.

This class struggle is always pushed aside once the big parties, the militarist factions, manage to take over; the first intifada, for example, was shut down by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). It was quickly transformed from a popular mass struggle to a top-down controlled opposition in the hands of a few corrupted bureaucrats. As we all know, once the militias and the professional revolutionaries take over, the people become spectators in their own "liberation," and the mass popular appeal of the resistance is lost. The PLO and Fatah crushed

the intifada in order to get the Oslo accords going, which divided the West Bank into small cantons and introduced the so-called Palestinian Authority. Fatah became the de facto long arm of Israel and the occupation, managing the apartheid from within. A similar (though not identical) process is taking place now with Hamas, in my opinion.

While I was composing this, the focus shifted completely to rockets striking Israeli cities from Gaza. Nine people in Israel died from Hamas rockets—including Palestinians, like in the village of Dahamash near Ramle. A few Hamas rockets reached as far as the West Bank. Rockets also came from Lebanon. The protests largely waned, and we don't see large riots anymore. One can't help but feel that Hamas and the militarist factions interrupted the birth of a popular, mass movement in the streets, in the inner cities of the occupation, which could have been capable of creating real damage to the stability of the state.

We can clearly see who benefits from this. The anarchy within Israeli cities is over, and Israel can sell the same old story to the world about us fighting Islamist jihadist terrorists who are shooting rockets at our cities. It's a much more convenient story, and much easier to deal with. Perhaps the strategy of weakening the secular revolutionary Marxist fronts of the 1980s and strengthening Hamas has paid off. Reactionary ideologies are easier to control, and whenever needed, they can take over the struggle and kill mass movements.

In this system, everybody plays his part. The left does what the left always, historically, does in times of social upheaval: try to pacify the resistance and absorb its energy in order to direct it towards more "acceptable" (i.e., ineffective) terrain. The same old outdated tactics, boring predictable demonstrations, "non-violent" nonsense, and empty talks about shallow "co-existence," peace, and democracy. There's nothing really to expect from what's left of the Israeli Jewish left, but even the Arab political parties have proved to be completely disconnected from what's happening in the streets.

The communist "radical leftist" Hadash party from the Joint Arab List and the Ra'am party both got into the Knesset (the Israeli parliament) in the elections of March 23. They urged people to protest lawfully and refrain from violence. No wonder the youth are completely alienated from them. For 48 Palestinians, the Arab parties in the Knesset are the same thing that the Fatah and the PA are for 67 (West Bank) Palestinians: another face of the occupation, sellouts, collaborators, conflict managers, a tool of pacification for the regime. Just like Syriza in Greece or Podemos in Spain, they appear in mass movements to appropriate the language and the energy of the people revolting in order to channel all of it back into acting within the system—and of course, in the moment of truth, they will completely betray people. I doubt they have any credibility left now.

It has almost become cliché to mention this, but the problem of the Palestinians is not just the far-right assholes, but Zionism. Israeli racist mobs are the direct consequence of a country established on deeply racist roots—a settler colonial project built on the ruins of villages and the driving away of the indigenous population, of a Jewish supremacist state—at the expense of everyone else. Israel is probably one of the worst examples of a nation state as a way of solving things for oppressed people. It's a lot easier for Israelis to get disgusted by far-right hooligans attacking a Palestinian, while the IDF's genocidal campaign in Gaza (let alone the violent birth of this state) either goes unquestioned or is completely accepted. The IDF is the "people's army," and it is putting the platform of "Death to Arabs" into practice more efficiently than any grassroots fascist ever could.

Right now, the Gaza Strip is completely in ruins. Military airplanes drop bombs on clinics, a media tower fell down, entire neighborhoods are erased. The situation is unbearable. As I'm writing this, about 250 people have been killed and thousands are displaced. Gaza has been under siege since 2007; it was a hell on earth before the current massacre, the biggest open prison on earth, and now it has reached a situation of human catastrophe. This is mainstream Zionism, not the extremist edges.

We hear a lot of talk about "co-existence" lately, especially in mixed cities like Haifa—about how the riots have damaged the "co-existence" between Jews and Arabs. This is a myth. This co-existence is a coded way to describe living under Jewish supremacy, implying that the Palestinians should keep quiet and erase themselves in order to fit in. The Israeli population that celebrated "Independence Day" just a month earlier will never see that as a provocation in a historically Palestinian city that suffered one of the most brutal attacks during the Nakba—but if Palestinians dare to show that they exist, they will pay severely. Co-existence is a counter-insurgency operation.

It's hard to predict what will happen next. The Shabab fought bravely against the police and liberated some territories, temporary autonomous zones in which the state wasn't present for just one night and you could walk freely, beyond clouds of tear gas, and imagine a different reality. But they should not be free from criticism. Many of the attacks had a nationalistic character, and they did some things that are hard to defend. Attacking synagogues, busses, and random people wasn't the best approach to the situation. What we desperately need right now is a joint insurrection, co-resistance, involving Jews and Arabs and all the people of this land, against all the authorities that keep us down and prevent us from seeing each other as fellow human beings. In the spaces of revolt, we must create autonomous liberated territories in which we could construct new

ways of seeing each other and the world around us—to reinvent living, sharing a space as equals.

Unfortunately, for the time being, this is a fantasy. Too much blood has been spilled for people to trust each other. You can feel the tension everywhere—we live together in this city, but invisible mental borders divide us constantly.

The situation in the so-called United States inspires me. The George Floyd rebellion was a real, diverse insurrection. Black and white working people found each other in the streets and fought together against the system that exploits them. I’ve even heard that the first guy who set fire to the police precinct in Minneapolis was a white dude. This is a huge improvement for a place like the United States, and the conditions are now ripe for a multi-racial revolt of people fighting as one.

So everything is possible, I guess. But it’s hard to remain hopeful. It feels like we have a long way to go. Still, some people are not waiting. Connections are being formed every second under the daily apartheid reality, and visible and invisible borders are being smashed as we speak. It’s also important to note that we don’t have much time—in view of climate crisis and the worsening ecological situation, future intifadas will be fought for resources, clean water, and breathable air, as much as for land.

I’ll finish with a quote from *Palestine, Mon Amour* by Alfredo M. Bonnano:

There is no prospect of peace in sight. The ideal solution, at least as far as all those who have the freedom of peoples at heart can see, would be generalized insurrection. In other words, an intifada starting from the Israeli people that is capable of destroying the institutions that govern them and of proposing peace based on collaboration and mutual respect to the Palestinian people directly, without intermediaries. But for the time being, this perspective is only a dream. We must prepare for the worst.

Appendix: A Beginners’ Field Guide to Israeli Fascism

Much like the American and European far right, Israeli fascists became much more decentralized over the last few years, going from big organizations to informal organizing, mainly online and via apps like Telegram. Many of the mobs and mobilizations to attack Palestinians during the revolts don’t have names, or else the names changed constantly, as they went underground once they were

exposed. I will still mention the big and well-known organizations, as they continue to be a force in mobilizations, spreading the propaganda of hate and serving as a gateway to more underground ways of organizing. I think it's important for people abroad to be familiar with Israeli far-right groups, organizations, symbols, and ideologies, because they operate in Jewish communities everywhere. It's a good way to keep our communities safe and to provide protection and solidarity to local Palestinians and refugees.

Kahanism—An extremist Jewish ideology named after rabbi Meir Kahane, an American rabbi active in Israel mainly during the 1980s, and a leading figure in the country's far-right politics. He proposed to expel mainly Arabs and all other non-Jews from Israel in order to “purify” the land and establish an halacha (Jewish law) monarchy under the biblical greater Israel borders. Under his political party, Kach, he proposed racist laws that were reminiscent of the Nuremberg Laws until the party was outlawed in 1985 for racism. Kahane was eventually assassinated in New York City by an Egyptian-American, but his thought and ideology are still alive in today's Israel and getting stronger.

Kahanist factions exist in Jewish settlements in the West Bank, especially among the extremist settlers of Hebron and Kiryat Arba, and they have been associated with numerous terrorist attacks and violent campaigns against Palestinians. Some (in)famous Kahanists include Baruch Goldstein, who opened fire on Muslim worshipers in the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron in 1994, killing 29 people. Kahanist terrorists and militias continue to commit violent acts against Palestinians in the West Bank, Israel, and abroad. Kahanist organizations around the world include the Jewish Defense League and the Jewish Task Force.

Lehava—A large Kahanist organization. The Hebrew acronym of “for the prevention of assimilation in the holy land.” Known for targeting mixed relationships, especially between Jewish women and Arab men, for sending thugs to threaten and attack Palestinians dating Jews, and for attacking Palestinians in the streets of Jerusalem. Many of the leading figures live in Jewish settlements in the West Bank. Lehava organized the racist “Death to Arabs” march from West to East Jerusalem on April 22, and many of the mobs looking for Palestinians in Jerusalem to attack in the days leading to the escalation are connected to the organization. They have some chapters abroad.

Otzma Yehudit—A Kahanist, ultra-nationalist far-right political party. Many of its members are students and followers of rabbi Meir Kahane. This party usually fails to enter the Knesset during elections, but one of its leading members, Itamar Ben-Gvir, entered the Knesset during the last election, while running with the Religious Zionist List. Ben Gvir contributed his own part to the escalation by

putting his “office” in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood and taking part in mobilizing lynch mobs in Ramle.

Hilltop Youth—A religious and nationalist subculture of settler youth in the West Bank. Nicknamed after their habit of constructing outposts on top of the West Bank hills. It involves some Kahanists, some other kinds of religious fundamentalism and ultra-nationalism, all violent and dangerous. Some extremely violent terrorist undergrounds have emerged from these groups, such as the Bat Ayin underground, which tried to bomb a Palestinian girl’s school in East Jerusalem. Hilltop Youth settlers were seen during the current mobilization of fascist mobs, especially in Lydd, where they were armed and attacking Palestinians alongside police, despite the “curfew.”

Im Tirzu—A more secular Neo-Zionist fascist organization, built around student cells on university campuses. Im Tirzu focuses on ultra-nationalist activity, Nakba denial, and defamation and legal campaigns against leftists, refugees, migrants, and human rights organizations. After they sued a Facebook group for calling them fascists, Israeli court said that they do “point to certain similarities to fascism.” So they are fascist even by the account of the Israeli justice system, which is quite an achievement.

Retrieved on 31 October 2023 from
crimethinc.com/2021/05/29/the-revolt-in-haifa-an-eyewitness-report

The following is an anonymous submission from Occupied Palestine, documenting and discussing the events of the past month in Haifa, Jerusalem, and the surrounding area. For some background on anarchism in the region, you could consult our earlier interview on the subject.

The No State Solution

**A Dialogue with Palestinian sociologist Mohammed Bamyeh &
Israeli political scientist Uri Gordon**

Mohammed Bamyeh & Uri Gordon

January 28 2024

Welcome everyone to our conversation with Palestinian sociologist, Mohammed Bamyeh and Israeli political scientist Uri Gordon, who is joining us from the UK. Thank you, Jason and Sunset Labs for hosting this event. Also shout out to Camas Books, University of Victoria's Anarchist Archive and ANVI for helping put this event together. We acknowledge we are holding this event a stone's throw from a clam-bearing inlet within the home territories of the Lekwungen peoples represented by the Songhees and Esquimalt nations.

These territories once featured old growth forests and meadows where Indigenous peoples cultivated the flowering camas plant whose bulbs are a key food source. Colonization, fueled by white supremacy, capitalism and state power has been dedicated to dispossessing the Songhees and Esquimalt nations from their lands and culture. In the face of this, we are in solidarity with the resistance, resiliency and cultural revitalization of the Songhees and Esquimalt nations, and we rededicate ourselves to interrupting structures of colonial violence and fostering decolonization at home and abroad.

Professor Mohamed Bamyeh from the Department of Sociology at the University of Pittsburgh is the author of "Anarchy as Order: the History and Future of Civil Humanity."

Dr. Uri Gordon, author of "Anarchy Alive!: Anti-Authoritarian Politics From Practice to Theory" is an independent scholar now based in the UK.

Thank you, Mohammed and Uri. Currently, we have a single state in Palestine, the state of Israel, which oppresses and displaces Palestinians. Were a Palestinian state established, do you think it would solve this problem?

Mohammed Bamyeh: When it comes to the solutions that have been proposed to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I think, it requires moral complexity. So there are several solutions, of course, that have been proposed in the past. Now, I think, and I've said that before, that the two-state solution, impractical as it may be, would be preferable to the status quo; to the occupation. It is not ideal, of course, and may not even be practical at this point, but it is better than the occupation.

Better yet is the one-state solution, which actually adjusts to the reality that we already have. But also that too seems to be impractical at this point.

Then we have the No State Solution, which in my view is better than the previous two solutions. So in a way, we have orders of preferences. It's not as though I want a No State Solution and I am not going to accept any other solution until I get that. I don't think that's actually a practical way of going about solving problems, especially when we have a genocide confronting us. There are orders of preferences.

So in a way, a two-state solution would solve some problems, but it might continue to be a colonial situation, under the guise of some other kind of a structure.

The two-state solution happens to be a statist solution that has some kind of a diplomatic, international consensus on it. That does not mean that it's going to happen. Ultimately, what we have is a settlement policy. That means that you do one of two things. Either you expel populations on both sides in large numbers, or you have two states, each of which have to accept that a substantial number of their citizens are from the other community with equal rights.

If that happens, that would be a vast improvement to what we have right now. But that is not what is on the table. Of course, as we know, even this solution (two-states) has never been accepted by any Israeli government, and not just by Netanyahu, not even after the Oslo Accords. Even then the two-states was never formally acknowledged as the end of the road.

Currently, we have one state, which is an undemocratic apartheid state in which half of the population that lives in the territory it controls has no rights at all. So there is a liberal, democratic kind of a principle that can be invoked here in favor of the one state solution. Of course, it hits another obstacle, namely that it goes against a fundamental Zionist image of a Jewish homeland. but when we talk about a No State Solution, I don't think we are actually talking about something that is a fancy idea. And we're not talking about something that is

unrealistic because the solutions that are being proposed are being argued to be realistic, but in fact are not so at this point. So we have to look beyond the existing reality.

Uri Gordon: Again, not much to add here. One sort of halfway house, again, not more or less practical than any of these other diplomatic solutions is the idea of a confederation, some kind of two-state confederation where citizens of each state can live in the territory of the other state and vote for parliament in their citizenship state and vote for municipal in the other state and that will enable absorption of refugees in 48 Israel and for settlers to remain.

You can talk about a three state confederation with Jordan, you can talk about turning Jerusalem into an international area and moving the UN headquarters to Jerusalem. I mean, all of these are, you know, are plausible diplomatic solutions, but right now there is not the political will to implement them and no pressure on Israel from the superpowers to concede to a situation which would mean redressing the imbalance and inequality and asymmetry on the ground.

And so I agree with Mohammed that the No State Solution is no less plausible than the other two, just because all of them seem so far away at the moment. But to me, the No State Solution is a horizon, the only horizon that includes the decolonization of social relations on the ground. Because even one state, would still be a capitalist state and we would still be imagining it along some kind of line, and some kind of by national class society. I mean, it's kind of impossible to imagine anything very positive right now. Naturally this takes me back to the immediate need to just stop what's going on and enable things to at least reach a level of tolerability for the Gazans at this point.

What would collective liberation for Palestinians and Jews look like?

Uri Gordon: What is collective liberation? Well, removal of the borders, destruction of the weapons, erasure of all the money, a classless society, the abolition of patriarchy, all the rest of that good stuff. I mean, you know the solution to the Israeli Palestinian question ultimately is the same solution to the social question. But that's our utopian horizon, right?

That's at this point, this is something that is informing us and informing the way we organize in anti-national and anti-fascist fronts. It informs our attempt to have horizontal structures in what we do to, I don't like the word, but to prefigure or to have a concrete utopia as much as we can in whatever we do currently in terms of our efforts.

Collective liberation looks different everywhere and it looks the same everywhere in this sense. It's something we feel at the moment that we are so far away from, that the most we can hope for is like gleanings of that vision in our every-

day efforts, even if they're on a very kind of human rights or even humanitarian level.

Mohammed Bamyeh: I agree with Uri about this. I just would like to add that one form of emancipation that I imagine and I consider to be ideal is when we emancipate ourselves from this commitment to a national identity that, due to oppression and resistance to it, has become our primary defining feature. There is a reason for that, of course, because we have a situation of conflict and where rights are denied or granted on the basis of nationality. So that actually redoubles people's commitment to their nationhood, as well as to the principle that rights should be granted on the basis of nationality—exclusively.

An ideal solution would be to make it possible for people to distance themselves from this commitment to nationalism. And that means solving the problem that causes this attachment to nationalism. We had some historical attempts at this before 1948. And when you look at the larger region of the Middle East, ultimately, the one time that region actually functioned well historically, was when we had open or minimal borders, when you had the free movement of populations, and where you had Jewish communities as part of the natural fabric of the region, not in Palestine, but in Iraq, in Egypt, in Yemen, in North Africa, and so on. You had Jewish communities living for centuries in various Arab territories and doing relatively well.

This historical reality came to an end gradually with the colonial direct or indirect creations, which are all states in the region. All these states have in the long run proved themselves to be failures in the sense that the only way they can live in the region is by generating conflicts with each other and vying for hegemony for no reason other than that this is the logic of the state as its rulers understand it. This is a logic of states that know that they lack legitimacy, so they generate legitimacy by constructing an enemy, which in turn allows each state to mobilize population under the banner of a common identity against an external enemy.

Emancipation is getting ourselves away from that straitjacket of modern rule and modern violence implanted in the region through colonial processes. The removal of the colonial inheritance in Palestine is especially urgent, but all around Palestine as well.

Mohammed, you have argued that throughout history, people have constructed anarchic systems of mutual obligation, solidarity, and trust that are integral to our collective well-being. Do you see paths towards mobilizing these values so as to end ethnic conflict in Palestine?

Mohammed Bamyeh: I do. One important thing about the Palestinian historical experience is that Palestinian society continued to exist after being significantly damaged through settler colonialism, and persisted in the diaspora as

well after 1948. It recreated itself in the refugee camps, but also elsewhere in the diaspora. Palestinian society then reconstituted itself by repurposing social traditions it already had.

For example, if you look at the refugee camps, in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, elsewhere, and how they survived between 1948 until the late 60s and beyond, you would note that one factor that had helped a great deal was the survival of Palestinian village culture, of mutual aid, support and generosity. Property rights, for example, in the camps were recognized informally without any documents, without any papers, without any government telling people who owns what. People like Nadya Hajj have done a lot of research to document how a traditional culture and traditional links actually allowed society to continue to exist under extreme conditions without the government and without any enforcing mechanism. Now I am not arguing that those were the only kinds of traditions that had helped people survive. But these traditions had become more voluntary in the new environment of refugee camps, but they remained mutually recognized by everyone, even as they were joined by another culture by the late 1960s: revolutionary culture.

So here you have modern revolutionary organizations that work across the refugee camps, that advance principles of leadership not tied to being a member of a notable family, that are generally meritocratic, and that work across all refugee camps. That revolutionary culture lived side by side with the traditional village culture among the refugees.

I am not proposing that social traditions alone can resolve ethnic conflict. That is, I think, asking too much of them, and that is not what they do. What they do is keep society in a state of existence and solidarity under unfavorable conditions. In Gaza, for example, and because of the hardships not of today but of those preceding October 7th by decades, the extended family institution became a lot stronger, precisely because it had become more crucial for the survival of the population.

So you have actually a social institution, the extended family, that gained in importance in proportion to the degree of suffering necessitating activating all other institutions of mutual aid in society, including the creation of modern revolutionary organizations that, too, assumed social service roles. But the family institution was always there and conditions of hardship reinforced people's commitment to it. So when I talk about these traditions, actually, that is the value that I see in them, even though sometimes they do foster a conservative mindset. But conservatism does not come out of nowhere; it becomes more solidly established when people see something in it that helps them continue to live together and to be able to count on each other in predictable ways.

Uri, you have been involved in solidarity actions to defend Palestinian lands from Israeli incursions. The refusal to serve in the Israeli army is one such action. Can you discuss other kinds of activism and how they disrupt state domination?

Uri Gordon: I wish there was a lot to discuss in the Israeli-Palestinian context. I know that since October and the start of the war, the Refusnik Support Organization “New Profile” has received hundreds of phone calls from young people seeking advice about refusing, evading. I mean, you know, we... We support what’s called gray refusal, as much as public refusal. There have been beginnings of demonstrations against the war by Israeli Jews. Demonstrations of Palestinian citizens of Israel have been much more harshly repressed and prevented.

Yesterday, there were a few dozens of demonstrators in central Tel Aviv. There were five arrests, and this was an explicitly kind of demo against the genocide, against the war, unlike previous ones that were under the guise of returning the hostages or maximum kind of trying to rekindle the civic uprising against the Netanyahu government. There are some accompaniment and monitoring efforts that are going on where volunteers are present, especially in the West Banks of the Brown Hills in the Jordan Valley that are recently suffering. I am sad to say that what we could say existed of an Israeli radical left perhaps 20 years ago has become much weaker. A lot of people have left the country. And right now I can’t really point to a lot of very sort of inspiring stuff. I mean, there are still, of course, Israeli-Palestinian joint struggle networks going on, but we really are at the low point in this respect.

When we think of and talk about a No State Solution, for us the most compelling model that comes to mind is the Syrian Democratic Council and the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, also known as Rojava. This is a multi-ethnic, multi-party federation of decentralized, self-governing districts that asserts its autonomy on the local level in a manner that spreads organically. Can you comment on this example?

Mohammed Bamyeh: I think this is a great example. I have been hearing, of course, a lot about it over the years, and I regard it as an ongoing experiment. That means that, like all experiments, there are going to be mistakes. People are going to hopefully learn from them. And there are two things I would like to say about Rojava. One has to do with the perception of the outside world of what Rojava is. And second, how Rojava resonates with other movements of what we call the Arab Spring. First, there are representations of Rojava as a Kurdish experiment. I find that is a problematic portrayal. For example, you have German filmmakers who go there and portray how the Kurds are great, the Arabs are bad. There is a certain amount of liberal racism in such a portrayal, which I find really

objectionable precisely because it goes against the spirit of what Rojava is. The portrayal I am talking about is not only uninformed. Moreover, it takes what is quasi-anarchist experiment and puts an ethnic kind of a stamp on it, which distorts the reality and also the entire premise of Rojava.

Second, Rojava does not come out of nowhere. It comes out of social traditions plus some organizational capacity. Indeed, throughout the larger region, we see elements Rojava everywhere. If you look at the Arab Spring movements from 2011 and 2019, you see everywhere what I have called an anarchist method of rebellion that seems to be ingrained in familiar social traditions. These were not centrally organized movements; they do not generate a political party to show them the way; they seemed uninterested in leadership; they relied on horizontal coordination, mutual help, and spontaneity as an art of movement. Now those movements were criticized because of these properties, because commentators who wanted to see results or outcome wanted to say, well, the Arab Spring movements have all failed because of their lack of organization, because of their anarchism, etc. But one thing that is actually interesting to me, sociologically, is that the ordinary people who did those revolts, were not interested in organizations or leadership or what have you, and they seem to be expressing something deeper, namely an interest in not being governed.

When you are in the revolution, in the heat of it, that is precisely the point when you are not being governed. And you enjoy that experience, and you want it to be the condition of society to come after the revolution. Now, of course, it is not as though the ordinary people who did the Arab Appraisals have actually read books about anarchism or even used the term to describe what they wanted. But this is more of an ingrained organic anarchism that was always part of the social traditions along with contrary traditions in the same minds of the same person.

On the one hand, there are social actions that ordinary people do in their village that are voluntary, solidaristic and enjoyable. On the other hand, these same people may also think that it would be nice if the country as a whole had enlightened despotism. Two apparently contradictory impulses in the same mind, the same person. And when you compare the Arab Spring to previous revolutionary movements, you see that the previous ones had a different character that had little to do with organic anarchism. So there is a learning process that is happening across the region that has an intuitive character to it in the sense that it is not organized, it is not actually identified as such by the people who do it. But they seem to have a historical memory of, and consequently a judgment on, how previous attempts at liberation have been conducted.

For example, we had charismatic leaderships in previous revolutions, but we do not have them in the more recent ones. Why? Because we have tried that already, and charisma has not helped us. So now another trick at emancipation is generated out of the same mind. So what is happening on Rojava, I think is not happening in a vacuum, and it is not happening only in one territory. Rojava seems to me to be an expression of a broader sentiment that you see in the whole region, all driven by a desire for a post-despotic, post-tyrannical kind of system that includes somehow not being governed. And again, this is not self-conscious anarchism, but it is an organic anarchism that had been mixed with other ways of thinking in the same mind until now.

I hope that the one thing that Rojava is doing is perhaps clarifying the distinction between these different ways of thinking about social and political order.

Uri Gordon: I have not been to Rojava and I don't know a lot about it. I mean, I think, you know, I think Mohammed's analysis right there was very insightful and I might add one thing, which is, you know, to me, there's not just Rojava, but also the example of the Zapatista communities in Chiapas, which have recently had a kind of further decentralization to their structure. And if you look at freedom-news.org.uk, *Freedom*, the oldest English language anarchist paper that I'm part of the collective of, we did a few features on that. And I think that inevitably all of the modern examples of quasi-anarchist social organization that we have seen have been at some kind of geopolitical juncture that has made them succeed or be able to succeed or not.

If we look at Rojava, I mean, you know, people don't like this to be mentioned, but you know, there is a cooperation between Rojava, at least the armed forces there, and the American military working together against the armed jihadist groups. The situation, in order for them to just found themselves, you know, in a juncture where they're basically more helpful to world powers than not. Similarly, the Zapatistas and Chiapas kind of had the fortune or misfortune of being in one of the economically and geopolitically marginal parts of Latin America where there were enough conditions to allow them to be more or less left alone, except when they weren't now, with the strengthening of cartel activity across the Mexican Guatemala border, we're seeing a lot more threats to them there.

So this is always a combination of the factors that Mohammed mentioned with a kind of external international geopolitical factors. Whether anything immediate can be learned from that for the situation Israel-Palestine, well, you know. We're so far away from that. Like I said in the beginning, right now we just have to halt the war crimes. We have to create a situation where some kind of frameworks, some kind of envelope that we found in order to... start somehow

re-building towards some kind of humane situation on the ground. The rest, you know, that's our utopian horizon.

A foundational value that Movement for a Democratic Society promotes is ecological renewal, because when communities recognize this is in their common interest, it reinforces cooperation and solidarity. Could such ecological activism serve as one avenue toward replacing state structures in Palestine?

Mohammed Bamyeh: I think that is without saying. There are also some Israelis and Palestinians who have highlighted that kind of ecological consciousness. Right now, however, this war is leading to an enormous amount of environmental degradation. I just saw a study that discusses the greenhouse emissions that have resulted just from this war, including explosives as well as the military transportation associated with them. I forgot what the exact figure, but there has been a huge increase in CO2 emissions since October 7th until today. So this war is not doing any good to the environment. Also, the way water resources are used has always been really a crucial part of the conflict, in an area where water shortage is acute, and the fact that the settlers have a lot more rights to water than the Indigenous population.

When Gaza was under Israeli occupation, for example, there were 7,000 Jewish settlers in Gaza and 1.5 million Palestinians back then. The 7,000 settlers had rights to as much water as the 1.5 million Palestinians. If you look at the West Bank, the situation is not that much better. So we are facing an area that is suffering from global warming, that already had water shortages before the current climate crisis, and the problem is going to get worse. The only way it can be resolved is by regional cooperation. It cannot be resolved any other way. One dimension of this conflict is going to concern who gets more of the same scarce resources. I do not see the environment benefiting all from this, only that the conflict is contributing to the global environmental crisis.

Uri Gordon: Both pollution and solutions don't know borders. The effects on the water table and the whole situation with effluence and everything else is connected immediately to the water management practices and to the unequal power and unequal allocation of water resources in the region. There was a time when, you know, during the Oslo years, it was thought that environmental cooperation could be a route. What often took place was that these projects have taken and still take place within very asymmetric power relations, and without the Palestinian side getting the kind of resources or power that would enable it to be an equal partner in these situations. One thing that connects to what Mohammed was speaking about before is the idea that, you know, thinking ecologically, thinking in terms of watersheds, in terms of biomes, in terms of climate

regions, is one way to wean ourselves off nationalist thinking and that it's potentially possible through that type of angle to achieve a different outlook that is no longer wedded to those things. But for that to happen, there first has to be a political equality, there has to be human dignity acknowledged equally for Palestinians as for Israelis.

We can talk about these things as very positive sort of potentials, but like diplomatic solutions, like everything else, none of this is going to go anywhere until there is a massive international pressure and a much stronger international movement to force the hand of the Israeli government.

Given the increasing influence of ultra-orthodox Judaism and fundamentalist Islam, for lack of a better term, how do you envision building a secular society in Palestine?

Mohammed Bamyeh: OK, well, that's easy. [Audience laughter.]

This is something I have worked on a lot, namely modern religiosity. And my perspective on it is that what we call fundamentalism is not the problem. It is a symptom of a problem. Let us take Hamas as one example. In 1948, there was no Hamas. In 1967, there was no Hamas either. But there was, in fact, a Palestinian resistance movement that was entirely secular. Resistance movements throughout the region as well against other governments were almost entirely secular until the late 1970s. What we call fundamentalism is a later outgrowth, which means that we have to ask ourselves where did it come from? It did not come from existing social traditions, even when most people could be regarded as "conservative." The religious interpretation of the conflict entered this theater of conflict very late. Hamas came about in Palestine only in 1987, nearly 40 years after the disenfranchisement of the Palestinians. Then "fundamentalism" offered itself up as a solution to a problem that no one else was able to resolve.

In the rest of the region, you can identify other social pressures, social problems and dislocation out of which what we call "fundamentalism" emerged in the manner of "the last option we have." Whatever you think of it, fundamentalism expressed in religious terms the radicalism of the opposition to the existing status quo. And that worked because religion essentially was the discourse that was freely available to anyone to use. No one had monopoly over it and so it became a kind of universally available political language to the lay person, and generally to the apolitical segments of the population. If you look at where fundamentalism has become a political force, you see similar things. Fundamentalism in the United States and the West has a different story that I can talk about if there is time. But when we look at the region that we are talking about, what we have is basically this kind of radical Hamas/Muslim Brotherhood anti-colonialism, responding in kind to the uncompromising radicalism of the colonial project itself.

Now, fundamentalism also is a program that is flexible, even though it does not look like it. And you can see that if you look at the history of movements that we call fundamentalist. They do not stay with the same program over decades. They change. Sometimes they want to overthrow the state by violent means. Other times they participate in elections. Hamas in 2006, for example, ran for elections like any other political party, and its electoral program barely mentioned religion. They took that completely out. And their electoral campaign back then in 2006, which they won, was entirely focused on combating corruption in the Palestinian Authority. And they were elected because most people perceived them to be actually cleaner. Not because they were more religious, but because they were perceived to be less corrupt than other organizations.

So in a way, I think when we just focus on fundamentalism itself as a frame of thought, we miss a lot of what fundamentalism is doing in society. These are people I think you can talk to. They do want conversation partners, I know that from personal experience, but they are typically dismissed by people who think of themselves as being more enlightened and educated than the fundamentalist. That kind of attitude leads to the fundamentalists becoming secluded and talking only with each other. Basically, I think it is wrong to focus on fundamentalism itself as a problem rather than on what is it a symptom of, what kind of collective problem is generating it.

Uri Gordon: I would strengthen this by saying that, you know, I think it's a mistake also to build this dichotomy between fundamentalism and secularism, or to take it for granted that we won't necessarily build a secularist society. I mean, I would certainly, if I have to live under a state, I want to live under a secular state, but not another religious state. I think we need to acknowledge that religious frameworks and faith frameworks, for better or worse, are a very sort of ingrained part of people's self-perception, especially the working class. I'm talking about both Jews and Palestinians in this respect. And so I think that the idea of sort of, you know, needing Israel or Palestine to be a secular Western country, has an imprint of a colonial mindset on it.

If you look at the Jewish working class (mostly right-wing) population, which is more traditional religious, not necessarily fundamentalist or orthodox, this is largely a population coming from, you know, what Mohammed was talking about before, the kind of former I think we can definitely also envision modes of multicultural existence and even radical democracy that are not fundamentally opposed to religious practice or tradition that are moving in ways that are towards more equality, especially gender equality and other aspects. So to me, it's not a question of rejecting religious faith or tradition, but of detaching that from political power, detaching religious organizations from the status of clien-

tism towards the state, whether those of the colonized or of and don't even get me started on the state client of Qatar, a state client of Israel, a state client of Iran, you know. There are these institutional connections between nationalist power and religion that need to be severed. But I don't think it's to be taken for granted that secularism and sort of the kind of Western enlightenment ideal is what we need to strive for.

[First audience question] **As a Palestinian in America, anarchism helps describe what I see as historic and traditional forms of Arab self-organization. I wonder if either of the speakers see anarchism when they reflect on Middle Eastern history. Are there any other contemporary anarchist thinkers or movements in Palestine, or who are Palestinian?**

Mohammed Bamyeh: I think for me there are really two ways to think about anarchism. There is self-conscious anarchism, which begins its career in the mid-19th century as an organized body of thought, a movement, organizations, and critical mass of intellectuals, although the basic ideas emerge earlier and can be traced back to the Enlightenment. Then There is a larger history of anarchism, which I have called organic anarchism. Other people have different terms for it. Kropotkin has outlined a compelling history of it. We see it as embedded in social traditions around the world.

In my book on anarchism, I included political philosophies from different world traditions, Islamic political philosophy, the Hindu world, and so on. So there is a larger history of anarchism, if you want to look at it that way. And there are differences between these two approaches to the idea of voluntary associational life. The latter one, organic anarchism, is abundantly obvious if we look for it. But it is always mixed with other approaches to social life as well. So one can say it is "contaminated" anarchism, although I do not like the term "contaminated." But if you have a better term. I will use it. Basically we are talking about an ideal conception of social life that is mixed with pragmatic ingredients. And you have to distill it to find the anarchist "pure substance," if you want to express it that way.

There are Palestinian anarchists as well as Arab anarchists as well as Iranian anarchists as well as Turkish anarchists, self-conscious anarchists throughout the whole region. They come and go, so it is not as though this is actually a massive political movement, but it is there. There are people who write about anarchism in Islam and from an Islamic perspective. And I think that can be done as well, and it works if you think of religion as one way by which people try to emancipate themselves from other powers. We also have religious slogans like the Islamic call "Allahu Akbar", which is inaccurately translated as "god is great," but literally it is "god is *greater*." Greater than what? Well, you do not need to ac-

tually say it because the implication is that god is greater than any tyranny that you happen to deal with at any given point in your life.

So god, which is an idea that is invisible, that you do not see, you do not have to, does not work like a government, even though we have governments that make use of the idea of god. But for the oppressed, the idea of god has the capacity to provide them with a sense that there is a force out there that is more mighty than tyranny. In my latest book on Islam, I discuss the historical *Sharia* as a quasi-anarchist system. The *Sharia* is typically translated as “Islamic law,” although in fact it has nothing to do with the idea of “law” as we understand it today. The historical had three properties that qualify it to be seen as a quasi-anarchist system of social life; namely, it has multiple schools, rather than a source. It houses contradictory judgments, in a way that modern law cannot. And thirdly, it was not outlined by any government or legislatures, but rather by the scholars of religion in civil society.

Of course, that was a system of living a pious life that did not come out of the state and had multiple sources, and you could pick and choose rules as they corresponded to the needs of ordinary life. That allowed people historically to lead what they considered to be a moral life over which they had some control. Of course, that historical *Sharia*, with its anarchist properties, can become an authoritarian system today when someone translates it into state law, which has never been the case historically. So in a way, there are many ways to actually think about the organic anarchism as something that is embedded in our historical traditions.

Regarding the individual who spoke earlier at the beginning of the event, I will ask this question now so you have the opportunity to answer it. The question was: is this event from the perspective of Palestinians or from the perspective of anarchists?

Mohammed Bamyeh: Well, the way I see it, there isn’t just one Palestinian perspective and there isn’t just one anarchist perspective. There’s a variety of perspectives and I think trying to impose a single perspective on a community rigidifies the reality that we have. I can only express my own Palestinian perspective and my own anarchist perspective. But I make no claim that other Palestinians agree with it or other anarchists agree with it as well. What makes us interesting as humans, I think, is that we have this variety of standpoints, as opposed to an entire community having just one viewpoint and one stand.

Combining two audience questions into one: Why is it so prevalent among Israelis to see or believe that the genocide, they are actually the victims of a genocide? Why does such a large proportion of the Israeli population, and even the Jewish population in the diaspora think that they are the victims

of genocide, not the Palestinians? A corollary to that question is: Why is it so difficult for both Israelis and diaspora Jews to see, even if they do not believe that what is happening to Israelis is a genocide, why is it so difficult for them to see that it's just fundamentally wrong on a political or humanitarian level?

Uri Gordon: I don't know that most Israelis or Jews think that they are currently victims of genocide. I mean, I think there's obviously an overemphasis on the Hamas atrocities and sometimes a tendency to minimize the ethnic cleansing and war crimes in Gaza. I think that's happening because of a sustained effort over the past 20+ years of what has become essentially a kind of hostile takeover or not so hostile takeover of Jewish public institutions in the diaspora, not just of the Israeli state, but by Republican-aligned, if not outrightly fascist forces who have sought to identify the state of Israel with the Jewish people to place Zionist blinkers on Jews' self-perception and to paint any and all criticism of the Israeli government as anti-Semitic.

The fact that here and there are also indeed, you know, anti-Semitic voices or just kind of black and white, 'my enemy's enemy' stupidity in the Palestinian solidarity movement does not help that. But fundamentally, it is the result of a very established by now propaganda line that has been pushed by the Israeli government, by its allies in the American Republican Party, and which has kind of gained traction within public discourse that has to do with identifying criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism, and which sort of works by way of constantly inflamed notions of Jewish collective trauma from the Holocaust in ways that are then skewed to be misapplied to the current situation.

There are also situations where I understand that Jews around the world may feel threatened by **some** of the expressions of outrage at what the Israeli government is doing. But I think that the way in which some Jews have come to feel threatened by any and all opposition to Israeli government practices is the result of a long-standing kind of propaganda effort that's been going on, and it's very heavily entrenched. And, you know, there is also a sort of concerted silencing of alternative Jewish and Israeli voices in the mainstream media, which I think feeds into that problem.

Can you discuss what you each mean by a No State Solution? What specifically would that look like? How would you explain it to someone with no background in anarchist thought? And can you recommend any works to help us think through the possibility of a No State Solution in Israel, Palestine, and around the world?

Uri Gordon: Like I said before, I mean, this is a question of what we place as our utopian horizon. What is a No State Solution? I mean, how is there a 'no

state' that has borders with other states around it, right? I mean, the No State Solution is something that encompasses the Middle East. It's something that encompasses the world. It's as, you know, as liberated and equal and has no borders, is a classless society, you know it's not as if there's a kind of blueprint. It's more that we are still able to somehow connect within this in this extremely dark time and how that might reflect on our concrete methods of organizing and doing politics together in the present day.

Mohammed Bamyeh: In anarchist thought historically, there was an imagination of kind of an ideal world consisting of a world federation of self-governing communes or small entities. And that goes all the way back to one of the original ideas of democracy as possible only on a small scale, as opposed to the large states that we have right now. So the idea is there, of course, the reality is that we have a world map that is governed by states, and the state form of political life is the only form that has become familiar to us. Therefore, we imagine emancipation in the form of one state replacing another.

But the No State reality, if we ever have it, is something that transcends the limits of the possible today. It is something that can be established only by persuasion. It is the one political program that cannot be done by force. You cannot force a 'no state' on people who want a state. And this principle applies to anarchy in general. It is built into the very logic of anarchy that you cannot impose on those who do not want it.

This is what I think is what makes anarchy ethically superior to a perspective, in that only persuasion is its force. We are talking about an enlightenment project, if you want to call it that, that gains more resonance out of the sense that the reality we have is not working. **The states that we have are generating conflict on an ongoing basis because conflict is the only way by which they can continue to live.** And this is something that is becoming more and more obvious, especially today. So in a way, the validity of the No State Solution comes from the experience with the existing states and their continuing failures. And this is something that one has to advocate for. Now, how that actually comes into being, it comes into being when there are enough people who are persuaded with the validity of the idea. And then of course, you have a structure that emerges out of that conviction.

So we are talking about a pragmatic process of adjustment to reality. That is not something that you can propose in a theoretical form before it begins to take shape out of the multiple failures of our current reality, the spread of social agreements on the no state as the solution to the problem of the state, and the incapacity of the current, imposed order to do anything other than generate constant wars and unspeakable suffering.

Now, I wanna say just a couple words about realism here. Ultimately, **the world has typically been changed by people who are unrealistic. That includes Zionism, by the way, because at the beginning of Zionism as a movement did not appear to be a realistic proposition at all. But yet, here we are.** If you look at many revolutionary movements, if you look at the Bolshevik revolutions or others, they were started by dreamers who had no connection to reality at all, whose revolution did not depend on an “accurate analysis of reality.” People who are realistic, who thought within the existing paradigm and within the structure of power as it is, tended to maintain the structure as it is because that is what “realistic analysis” leads you to. You understand the situation as it is, as a structure, meaning that it cannot be changed because you have understood it to be necessary and inevitable.

So when we talk about the ‘No State’ Solution, we are also talking about the perspective that does not just reject existing reality, but also rejects realism as a perspective. If you look at the Palestinian resistance movement and its history, its greatest episodes corresponded precisely to conditions that were “not suitable” for it. The general strike in 1936, the mobilization in the camps in the late 60s, under completely desperate conditions after a defeat. The first Intifada emerged out of conditions where the entire world had forgotten about Palestine, and so on. So we do have actual movements that are remarkable, that we have witnessed in our own lifetime, that happened precisely because people rejected realism as a perspective. And that is actually what we’re talking about right now: the inadequacy of the realistic perspective to prevent genocide.

Audience question: What can we be doing internationally to organize resistance to war and domination in West Asia?

Uri Gordon: Each one with their local context. I’m a big believer in ‘think global, act local.’ I think that any anti-militarist action you take, any action you take against the arms trade is in some knock-on-way automatically a Palestine solidarity action, is in some knock-on-way automatically a climate action. is an anti-capitalist action and so on. The very immediate, sort of not particularly radical or revolutionary thing that people can do is, put the resources somewhere helpful. And I know that there has been a slide with a few options for donations, right? That has gone with this event and perhaps we can show that and maybe the moderators would like to just highlight those afterwards and wherever we can find a Palestinian movement that is seeking out allies, accomplices, call it what you want, that aligns with how we see things, and that’s worth working along with.

It’s up to people to look at their their very local conditions and to look at who is already organizing on the ground and do stuff with whatever facet of that is

closest to their views and closest to where they can put their energy in addition to just immediate sort of support for those destinations that are mentioned here on the slide.

Mohammed Bamyeh: I just want to emphasize one thing about what Uri said, which is the importance of boycotts. That is, it is one thing that we can do as individuals without even being part of any movement. The apartheid system in South Africa collapsed largely because of this global boycott, which was based on the global realization that this is a racist, unethical system that should not exist in the modern world.

The Israeli government is very aware of the effectiveness of boycotts, and it devotes a huge amount of effort to quash the boycott movement. Politicians in the US, as well as in Europe, are being lobbied in order to pass laws to ban boycotting, to ban people from being able to simply call for boycotting institutions that terrorize the world, including shopping at specific companies! But that shows you exactly that this is a serious movement, which is also nonviolent. Its effectiveness lies in its persuasive and communicable nature.

You mentioned there's more than one school of thought among Palestinians and more than one school of thought in solidarity organizing. One such example we've seen here today is anarchistic. Another example that comes to mind is with the Palestinian youth movement in the US that has been organizing side by side with the Party for Socialism and Liberation, the PSL or ANSUR or the People's Forum, who are largely Marxist-Leninist communist groups that have had questionable takes and rhetoric on the struggles of Syrians, of Afghans, of Uyghurs, and Ukrainians, and so on, which further demonstrates a lack of mutual internationalist solidarity. With that in mind, what has the global Palestinian solidarity movement done right, and where can it improve?

Mohammed Bamyeh: I do not think that we need to insist on uniformity of viewpoints.

Palestinian society is diverse, just like any other society, but Palestinians suffer from occupation and denial of rights. Their problem is uncomplicated. You do not really need to write a philosophy book to explain why this kind of oppression is bad. It is self-evident. For me, the solidarity movement works best when it uses direct, easy to understand language that highlights the idea of justice as something that is intuitively understandable, and that uses whatever language of rights that everyone can understand. Human rights, for example, right to water, sustenance, dignity, citizenship rights. We are able to agree on all these things at the theoretical level.

I think that we shoot ourselves in the foot when we make the story more complicated than it needs to be. It is a simple story.

Speaking of boycotts, what has been the effect of the international BDS movement on the radical left within Israel?

Uri Gordon: The radical left in as much as, you know, still standing has been and continues to be supportive of BDS. I am part of a group that was set up already, I think within a year of the original callout coming out, which is called Boycott From Within, has kind of course overlapping membership with Israelis Against Apartheid and so on. And so, you know, there are, there is support for that within Israel.

But again, the Israeli radical left is very small and fighting a retreating battle. The oppositional movement in Israel is in much better conditions than in Russia, for example. I think certainly for Israeli Jews, there is still, uh, a space of, of permitted protest and everything else. But, um, the society, Jewish-Israeli societies, siege mentality, the very ingrained militarism of the society, the sort of perpetuated sense of existential threat that is embedded in public discourse in media, everything else, has meant that at least the emotional reaction to Israeli radical left is always as to essentially people who “support the enemy.” For you “Canadian” organizers, imagine how they might think of you in Alberta, and you’ll have a sense of what it might be to be a radical in Israel. [Audience laughter.]

I believe that any solution to the Israel-Palestine problem starts and ends with the US government. Fundamentalist Christians hold a huge amount of sway in the US and strongly support Israel, as well as being anti-Semitic themselves. How do you see dealing with this issue and problem?

Uri Gordon: Good luck, yeah. I think they’re gonna get the White House soon and we’re in big trouble.

Mohammed Bamyeh: If I may just say one thing about this, it is that we cannot rely on the US, although of course, if the US does the right thing, the problem will be solved. But it is not going to do it. And no other state is going to do it, by the way, even though everyone knows that if you talk in terms of the international relations paradigm, you have a conflict where one party is very strong and the other party is very weak. Which means that the stronger party has no incentive to give up anything, and the weaker one has no power to actually get the absolute minimum it could live with. When you have an equation like that, you need a third factor to come in from the outside and impose a solution. That typically would have been the US, but Palestine is not the priority for any mainstream US politician. It is not the priority for the Europeans either, and it is not a priority even for Arab governments.

Therefore, the only third factor we have is a resistance movement that actually changes the equation. And that is the only thing that has always worked—not in the sense of solving the problem, but in the sense of putting the problem back on the map. So every time there was an interest in resolving this conflict at the level of states, that happened *only* because Palestinians did something dramatic that upset the status quo. Only then do states pay attention and say “oh, there’s a problem there, we have to do something about it, or at least pretend to do so.” The same thing today is happening. No one before October 7th was talking about the Two State solution. Everyone was talking about the so-called “Abrahamic Accords,” which meant peace between Arab governments and Israel and forgetting about the Palestinians. That was where we were heading until Hamas, whatever you think of Hamas and whatever it did, at least put Palestine back on the map.

And then all of a sudden Biden is talking about the two-state solution, in a completely insincere way, I believe, because ultimately he is not doing anything to actually make it happen. And you can tell that important European governments, such as Germany, have no real commitment to a solution either and were happy with the status quo before Oct. 7th, even though they claim otherwise. But that claim is pure hypocrisy. Other European powers that are more sincerely interested in a solution do not have the influence required to make it happen. So Palestinians, along with the solidarity movement, have only themselves to rely on—as has always been the case.

So the only dynamic you have right now, is basically the only dynamic that has historically worked out, which is that the people who are oppressed take matters into their own hand, and continue to struggle or resist in ways that catch international attention, and put themselves back on the map. This is not the first time this has happened in Palestinian history. It is a repeated pattern where oppressed people become agents in a process of struggle, as opposed to being objects of colonial rule.

What do you think would be the strongest force to counteract the tendency among Jewish Israelis to dehumanize non-Jews and especially Palestinians?

Uri Gordon: The fish stinks from the head. [Audience laughter.] The problem is the mainstreaming of the theological supremacist and racist discourse by the Israeli leadership. As well as the level of kowtowing to the far right that we have seen, not just by Netanyahu, but also by what is now shown as the centrist alternative. People aren’t born to dehumanize, right? People dehumanize because A, it comes at no cost, and B, because they are given frameworks of thinking that encourage them to do that. I think we should think about it the same way as you know, maybe a lot of the American mainstream public was de-

humanizing Afghans and Iraqis earlier this century, to me dehumanizing mentalities are a sort of discursive symptom of actual power imbalances. It's a mechanism for people to self-legitimize, to give themselves some kind of way of reconciling their desired self-image as good people with the fact that atrocities are being committed in their name. And the way to reconcile that is to portray the victims of those atrocities as uniformly threatening, menacing, dangerous enemies who are forever ill-disposed to agreement and motivated by hatred and by anti-Semitism and the rest of it, which can become a self-fulfilling prophecy, of course.

I mean, you know, we saw how... support for Hamas skyrocketed in Palestinian homes, because of that sort of element of agency that Mohammed was talking about, whereas you know **this situation that has been created by the refusal of the Israeli side to move anywhere really for 15-20 years or more.** So I don't think demonization as a discursive issue can be solved at that level, I think it's symptomatic of the very kind of material power relations that exist.

In order to envision a different discourse, we need to envision a different leadership, we need to envision a different sort of prevalent ideology, we need, I mean, and I don't know if, you know, Israel and Palestine is going to have something like it, a South African moment. I mean, who knows, that would be a very sort of positive thing to happen and something that nobody really could foresee a year or two before the collapse of apartheid. So the fact that the collapse of apartheid or the collapse of the Soviet Union were things that happened without any kind of major expectation for it to happen, that still gives me hope. But it's a very, very thin sliver.

Mohammed Bamyeh: Just briefly, I agree with Uri mostly. I just say for change of public opinion to happen, you need two things, or one of two things.

First of all, a process of persuasion. We can talk about what this means in terms of how people talk about security and all that. More importantly, and more effectively is to reveal that the situation that we have is very costly, that the occupation is not free of cost. That is something that I think should happen on an ongoing basis. The fact that the Palestinian cause was on its way to be completely forgotten before October 7th, had to do with the perception in Israel and outside of Israel among other governments, that the occupation does not matter because it is not costing any government anything. What happened on October 7 added a cost to the occupation. But basically, any other way of increasing the cost of occupation, including boycotts, for example, can have a similar effect.

What are some good resources for what Mohammed was saying about fundamentalism and secularism?

Mohammed Bamyeh: There is a lot of literature on that right now. If I may, I would recommend my own book. [Audience laughter.] *Life Worlds of Islam* (2019) where I do go into the origins of this movement and how it should be read and what could we learn from that kind of analysis. Sorry about this self-promotion. But it is based on works that other people have done prior.

Uri Gordon: For me it's also not quite self-promotion, but I did support Mohammed Abdou in producing the book *Anarcho-Islam*, which you mentioned before and I think is even present in that room right now. So that's out from Pluto Press and has a lot of quite fine-grained discussion of the possibilities of Islamic Anarchist jihad, what he calls this kind of anarchistic grappling with the sources.

Our last question is for Uri. Does the painting behind your head represent this conflict?

Uri Gordon: God, no. Yeah, I mean, I know that it says coexist and shit. This is a poster that I picked up maybe 20 years ago at the Museum on the Seam, which is a Jewish-Arab kind of shared gallery that used to exist on the border between East and West Jerusalem. It's actually a... portrait by a German artist. And no, first of all, because I don't believe in coexistence, **I believe at this point in joint struggle and in a shared fate of Jews and Palestinians on the ground and anywhere else.**

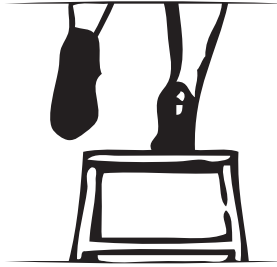
And I don't believe in erasing any asymmetries that exist. That's the first time I've actually been asked about this, it's something that my ex picked up and it kind of stayed in the house. But no, it's not. I wouldn't go too far with that.

We thank Uri and Mohammed's point about how we can help most directly on everybody's chair as a flier for how to engage in direct action and help the people of Palestine. So please do what you can. And thank you very much for a wonderful afternoon.

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This zine is a transcription of The No State Solution: A Dialogue with Palestinian sociologist Mohammed Bamyeh & Israeli political scientist Uri Gordon, a live and recorded event which took place on January 22, 2024 in unceded Lekwungen territory in so-called occupied "Victoria, BC, Canada." While a few grammatical errors have been fixed, we did our best to stay true to the original transcript of our speakers. **It is not to be confused with Shuli Branson's No State Soluton (2023).**

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